Balanced reading instruction for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children

By

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Balanced reading instruction for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children

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2018

I declare that the thesis I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor at the University of Pretoria is my own work. All the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references. This thesis has never been submitted by me to any other tertiary institution or university for any academic award or publication.

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Namugenyi Deborah Kaggwa   Date

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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- Informed consent/assent,
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- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD thesis

to my late Mum and Dad, Gertrude and Fred Kaggwa,

for their dedication and hard work to give us the best education. Dad and Mum, although you have passed on,

the legacy you left behind still stands.

"Mwebaale kutwagala, okutwagaza n'okutunyikiza okusoma"

I am proud of you.

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- ❖ Above all, the Almighty God for protecting me while I travelled between Uganda and South Africa undertaking the programme as well as for good health and financial provisions. "Glory be to God Almighty."

DECLARATION OF EDITING

This is to certify that I performed a language edit on the PhD thesis

Balanced reading instruction for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children

by Deborah Kaggwa Namugenyi

on 1–7 March 2018.

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BICS	Basic International Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSR	Collaborative Strategic Reading
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PTCs	Primary Teachers Colleges
RT	Reciprocal Teaching
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

The study explored, adapted and implemented a balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children in Uganda. The research investigated the effectiveness of the uniquely designed balanced reading instruction programme to improve teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English. The study was prompted by low reading levels, in particular reading comprehension, as experienced by Ugandan primary three bilingual children.

The study was of a critical qualitative nature and employed participatory action research methodology. Being action-oriented, the study was conducted in a primary school setting in partnership with four primary three teachers as direct participants and their children as indirect participants. Data was collected through focus group interviews, direct observation of lessons, analysis of teachers' lesson plan books, children's activity books and assessment sheets and a researcher's reflective journal. The focus group interview sessions and the lessons observed were videotaped and transcribed. Data from the four sources was analysed and categorised in order to identify the themes and sub-themes that emerged.

The study was premised on a conceptual framework that was formulated using two theories, namely Cummins' (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's (1984) empowerment theory. The conceptual framework implied that teachers' instruction influenced children's attainment of reading comprehension in both their native language and English. The empowerment of teachers with effective strategies, reading activities and resources that enhanced reading comprehension of bilingual children was examined from this perspective.

Findings of the study revealed that there were gaps that existed in teacher participants' instruction of reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English. The findings also indicated that teachers' participation in the balanced reading instruction programme made them gain skills, strategies and a positive attitude to the instruction of reading comprehension in Runyankole which assisted them to teach English. Consequently, bilingual children attained reading comprehension strategies in Runyankole which they also used to improve their reading comprehension in English.

The study recommended that professional development programmes, particularly for the teaching of reading comprehension in the native language, as well as storybook writing workshops should be initiated by the Education Department of Mbarara Municipality, Uganda. In addition, the head teachers should devote equal time to the teaching of reading comprehension in Runyankole and English in the lower primary classes. Primary teachers' training colleges should also introduce explicit teaching of reading comprehension in Runyankole and English in the curriculum of the early grades.

KEYWORDS

ENSHOMESA EKWETWA OKWINGINGANA OMUKUSHOMESA OKUSHOMA KW'ABAANA ABAKUGAMBA ENDIIMI IBIRI OMUBUGUFU

Ogo'mushomo gukyondweize okushoma kwa'abaana abakugamba endiimi ibiri omu ihanga rya Uganda. Ebigyendererwa by'omushomo ogu bikaba biri aha kutungura enshomeesa y'abashomesa nigukozesa enshomesa ekwetwa okwingingana omukushomesa okushoma.

Okukyondooza oku kukakorwa omukukwatanisa kw'omukyondoozi n'abashomesa hamwe n'abeegi abayetabire o'mushomo ogu. Omushomo ogu gukakozesa okuganira n'abashomesa, okureeba abashomesa nibashomesa abeegi okushoma n'okuhandiika, okushwijuma ebitabo by'abashomesa n'abeegi hamwe n'okureeba byona ebyabasiize kuhwera kutungura enshomesa y'abashomesa. Ebyarugire omukukyondooza bikajwangurwa byakora ebicweka by'omushomo ogu.

Omushomo ogu gukaba gwemereire aha nyomyo ibiri ezirikwetwa Cummins' (1984) linguistic interdependence hypothesis na Rappaport's (1984) empowerment. Enyomyo ezi zikaba nizoreeka ngu okushomesa kwa'beegi kwegamire aha nshomesa y'abashomesa. Nahabwekyo okuhamisiriza abashomesa omumuringo y'okushomesa n'ebikukorwa hamwe n'ebikozebwa by'okushoma bikakyondezerwa omushomo ogu.

Ebyarugire omushomo ogu nibyoreka ngu abashomesa abagwetabiremu bakaba nibaburamu omunshomesa y'okushomesa n'okuhandiika omu Runyankole nanorunjungu. Ekyokureberaho bakaba batakushobororagye entaniso eri ahagati y'engamba y'enyuguta z'enteta n'engambisa. Kandi bakaba nibajwanzya orunyankole nanorujungu omukushomesa abeegi okushoma. Konka omukwetaba omushomo ogu abashomesa aba bakakuguka omukushomesagye ebibabeire batakumanyagye haza byahwera n'abeegi okushomagye

Omushomo niguhabura abashomesa kuguma nibeyongera nibashoma emiringo y'okutungura enshomesa y'okushomesa abeegi okushoma namunonga y'orunyankole. Kandi abebembezi bebyokushomesa nabo bateeho enterane z'abashomesa ezokubahiga okweyongera okukuguka omunshomesa y'endiimi zaabo nanorujungu.

EBIGAMBO EBIKURU

- Okwingingana omukushomesa okushoma
- Okushomesa ishomo ry'okushoma n'okuhandiika
- Abeegi abakwega ekyakashatu kandi nibagamba endiimi ibiri
- Runyankole nk'orurimi rw'enzarwa
- Oruzungu nk'orurimi orukwegyesebwa ahaishomero

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CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Ugandan children aged 6-8 years are taught literacy in both their native language and English while in the lower primary classes (primary one to three) (National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), 2007, p. 39). The primary objective of teaching children literacy is to enable them to attain proficiency in the two languages as well as a breakthrough to literacy and lifelong learning (NCDC, 2007, p. 39). To achieve this objective, teachers of the lower primary classes engage children in various reading activities. These activities include associating word with word; associating word with picture; completing pictures and words; reading and completing sentences; reading and comprehending different texts; reading and describing different texts in both the native language and English (NCDC, 2007, p. 39; Garton and Pratt, 1998, p. 250).

It is through reading activities that children are expected to acquire different literacy skills for lifelong learning. Such skills include decoding skills, comprehension skill and skills for critical analysis of texts (Barrat-Pugh and Rohl, 2000, p. 23). In spite of teachers' engagement of children in various reading activities, children's literacy levels in both their native language and English, particularly reading comprehension, have remained low at primary three level in Uganda (NCDC, 2007, p. 27). This was confirmed by the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) reports (Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), 2010; 2011), which reported low literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of children in primary schools of Uganda.

The reports also revealed that the majority of children at primary three level could not comprehend the stories they read in either their native language

or in English. The findings further suggest that instructional strategies teachers use are likely to cause reading comprehension difficulties among bilingual children aged 6-8 years. The findings of Twaweza, Uganda learning assessment report revealed that Ugandan children in lower primary classes had low literacy levels in English (Twaweza, 2016). The report spelt out that only one out of every five children aged 8 in all primary three classes sampled across the country could read and understand an English story text on the level of primary two (7 years).

These findings indicate that reading comprehension is a major cause of the low literacy levels of Ugandan primary three bilingual children.

In fact, reading comprehension is generally a challenge to bilingual children. For instance, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2000) report indicated that a significant proportion (42%) of children in early grades in the United States of America (USA) could not read successfully. This proportion comprised Hispanic children whose primary language was Spanish and who learned English as a second language. The reading difficulties stemmed from inability to understand how phonemes are connected to print, inability to decode unfamiliar words and inability to read fluently (Ramirez, 2000). Yet comprehension is an important skill for lifelong learning. This skill concerns with understanding and selectively recalling ideas in individual sentences, inferring relationships between clauses and sentences, organising and summarising ideas in the text and making inferences (Irwin, 2007, p. 10).

Hence, this study sought to investigate specific reading comprehension difficulties experienced by bilingual children at primary three level. The findings on specific reading comprehension difficulties then directed this study to the design, adaptation, implementation and evaluation of the balanced reading instruction programme through participatory action research. The teachers would also attain better strategies for teaching

reading comprehension both in the native language and English through their participation in the programme.

1.2 Background to the study: Ethnic groups and languages in Uganda

Ugandan children are exposed to two or more languages in their early years of schooling. These languages are children's native languages and English as their second language. Uganda, being a multi-tribal country, consists of four major ethnic groups, namely Bantu, Plain Nilotes, Highland Nilotes and Sudanics. The Bantu occupy central and southern Uganda and the plain Nilotes and river-lake Nilotes eastern and northern Uganda (Pawlikowa-Vilhanova, 1996). It is from these four ethnic groups that twenty-five local languages are derived, which are further classified into major community languages according to their cross-language similarities, namely Luganda, Runyankole-Rukiga, Runyakitara, Luo, Ateso or Akaramojong and Lugbara. The community languages are widely used as means of communication in both families and communities by the people of Uganda (Education Policy Review Commission, 1989, p. 32).

The community languages are also used as the medium of instruction in Ugandan primary schools, particularly in the lower primary classes. The use of community languages as a medium of instruction was implemented in Uganda in fulfillment of the recommendations of the Lagos African language policy conference (1984), which was held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Inter-African Bureau on languages.

The conference recommended that African languages should be developed as languages of instruction and taught to children and adults in order to develop and maintain the rich cultural heritage expressed in indigenous languages. In addition, it was highlighted that children learn better and faster if taught through their own native language (Education Policy Review Commission, 1989, p. 32).
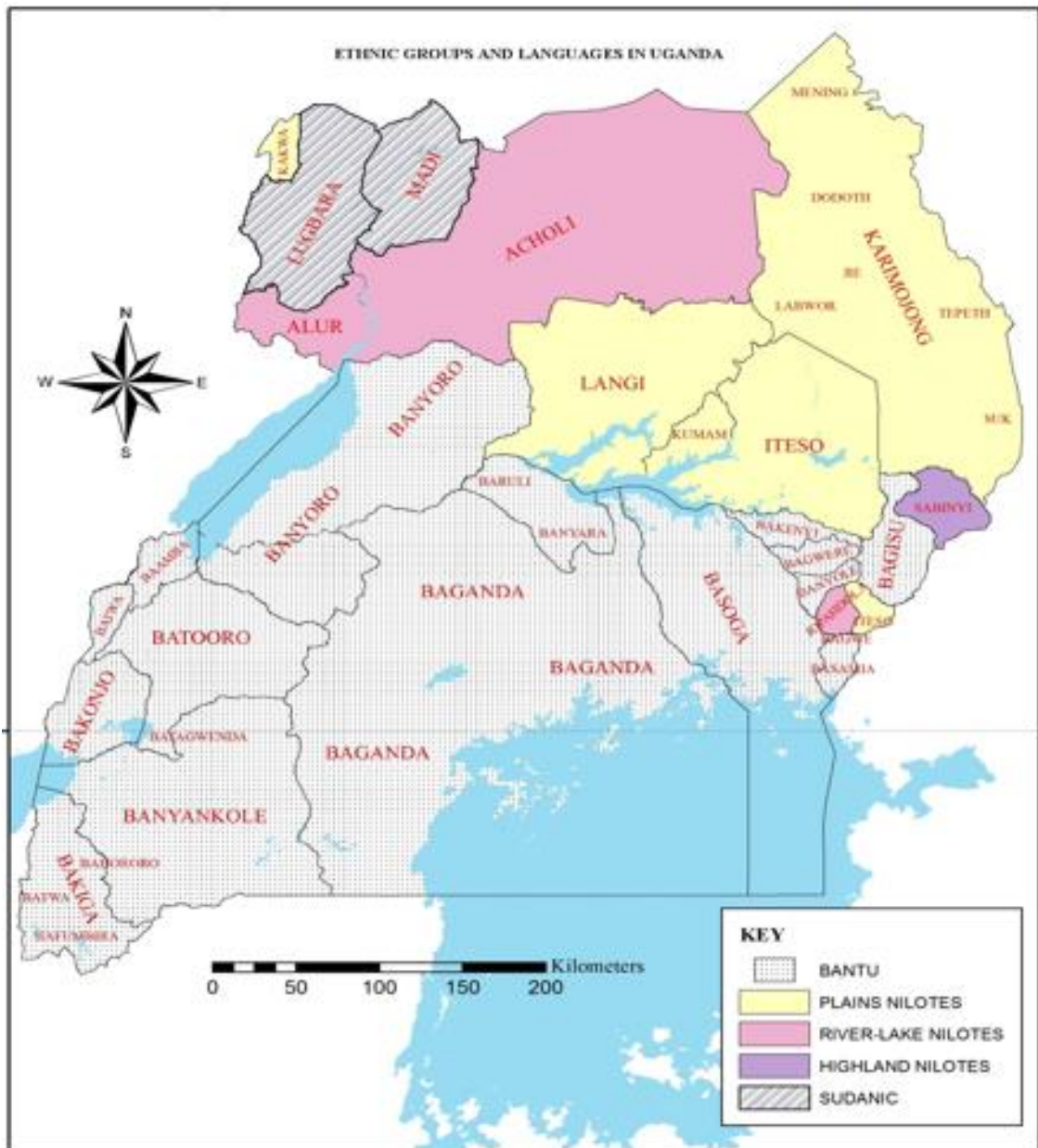
Figure 1.1 Ethnic groups and languages in Uganda

In fact, international declarations and conventions such as the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child also support the learning of at least two languages in education. These languages could be community languages or native languages and international languages such as English (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2011).

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English was introduced to Uganda as a language of law and administration when it was declared a British protectorate in 1894 (Scheiderer, 1999). Christian missionaries, who were in charge of the Ugandan education system during the British colonial era, promoted English as an official language by using it as a medium of instruction at all levels of education (Education Policy Review Commission, 1989, p. 1). The community languages were taught to children and adults mainly to enable them to read the Bible and prayers (Pawalikova-Vilhanova, 1996).

Since then, English has remained the major language of administration, law and higher levels of education and therefore has the status of an official language. As Ugandans had inter-tribal conflicts that brought disunity and biases among themselves during the colonial era, it was difficult to identify a unifying local language; consequently, English was preferred as a neutral and official language (Uganda Government, 1992, p. 16-17; Pawlikova-Vilhanova, 1996). Countries such as Uganda and Malawi, where English plays an important second-language role and is also a language of law and administration in a multilingual setting, are classified as being in the outer or extended circle of the concentric model of the spread of English (Crystal, 2003, p. 107), as illustrated in Figure 1.2 below.
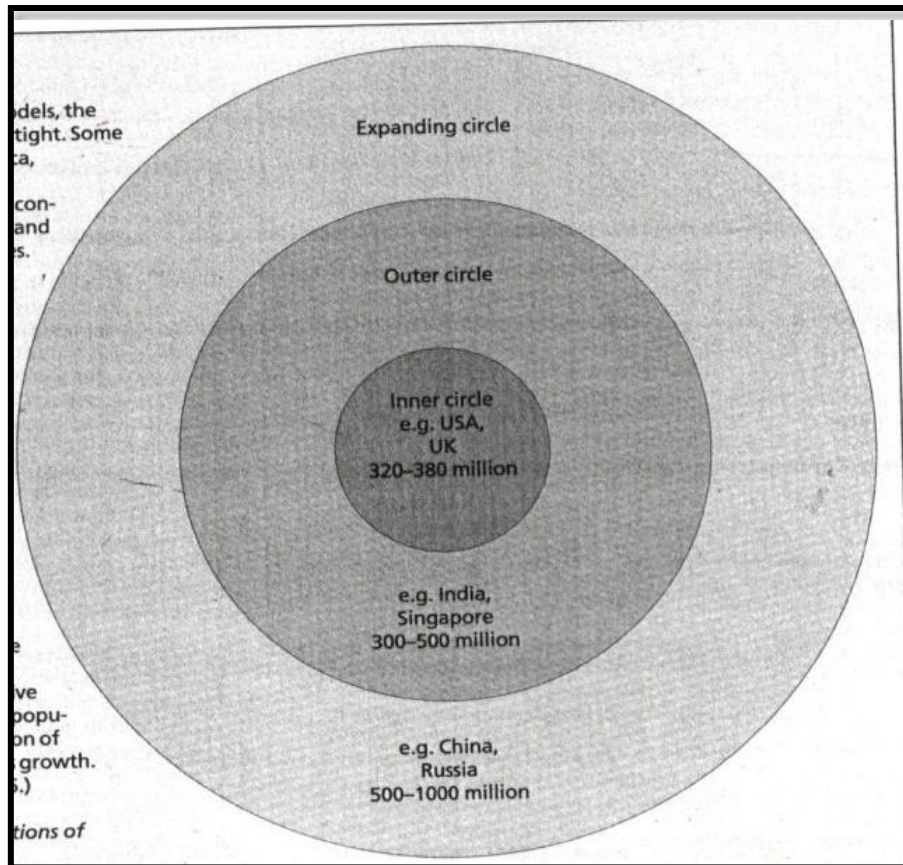
Figure 1.2 Concentric model (Crystal, 2003, p. 107)

The inner circle represents countries whose primary language is English, namely the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and USA. The outer circle comprises countries where English is a second language and is used as a language of law and administration in addition to the native languages. The expanding circle represents countries in which English is recognised as an international language, but not included in their language policy and is therefore taught as a foreign language (Crystal, 2003, p. 107). Uganda is among the countries in the outer circle, English is incorporated in language policy as an official language which children ought to learn as an additional language.

English has been used as a medium of instruction and an examinable subject in primary education (primary one to seven) since the colonial era. Less emphasis was put on the native language instruction in primary education, yet children's lives are firmly rooted in their native language, which they use in their homes and playgroups (Brock-Utne, 2000). Although English is used as a medium of instruction and is taught and examined as a language subject at the end of primary education, children's literacy and reading comprehension levels in English are generally still very low in the lower primary classes (primary one to three) (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2006).

The current Ugandan language policy was formulated in 1992 following the recommendations made by UNESCO and the OAU Inter-African Bureau on Languages (1984) conference. The recommendations highlighted that African languages should be developed as national media of communication as well as media of instruction for pedagogical and cultural reasons and because of its benefits (Uganda Government, 1992, p.16). Community languages of Uganda were thus brought on board and incorporated in educational institutions as a medium of instruction in addition to the English language. The language policy states the following:

"Community languages/local languages should be used as a medium of instruction from primary one to primary four (6-9 years), with English being taught as a subject in these classes. Thereafter, from primary five to primary seven (10-12 years), English should be used as a medium of instruction and taught as a subject as well. The community languages should be taught as a subject in these classes. English language would continue to be used as medium of instruction at other levels of education in Uganda (secondary schools and tertiary institutions)" (Uganda Government, 1992, p. 15-17).

Nevertheless, the NCDC (2006) and UNEB (2011) found out that children faced difficulties in comprehending the standardised stories read in either in

English or in their native language. The majority of the children surveyed were from rural primary schools of Uganda and came predominantly from families of low socio-economic status (UNEB, 2011). The NAPE (2011) report also pointed out that children faced challenges in describing what they read in the standardised stories, which was also an indicator of comprehension difficulties among bilingual children. The findings are illustrated in Figure 1.3 below.
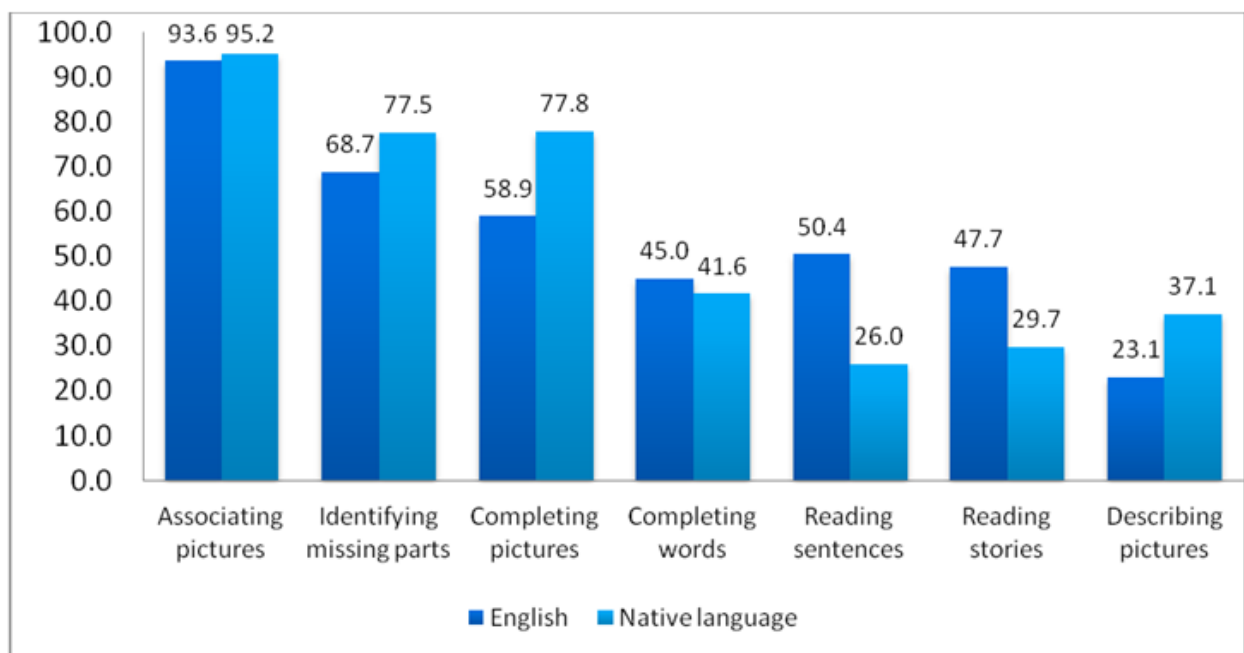
Figure 1.3 Children's proficiency in reading comprehension in English and native language. Source: NAPE Report (2011)

The Uganda National Examinations Board (2011, p. 38-45) argues that children's reading comprehension difficulties are probably attributable to inappropriate instructional strategies employed by teachers when they teach reading. As a teacher as well as an examiner in teacher education for thirteen years, I have also observed a number of lessons where teachers tend to emphasise vocabulary acquisition more than comprehension skill development in children aged 6-8 years. For these reasons, I conducted this study in collaboration with teachers to design, adapt, implement and evaluate the balanced reading instruction programme that could equip them

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with better strategies for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children in Uganda.

1.3 Rationale for the study

The native language and English are taught concurrently to Ugandan children aged 6-8 years in their early years of formal schooling. This is done to ensure that the literacy skills, which include reading comprehension, that are attained in the native languages will help children learn English as a second language (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2007, p. 39). The UNESCO (2014) report on teachers' issues in Uganda points out that children's low literacy levels, in particular reading comprehension could also be attributed to teachers' lack of sufficient pedagogical skills and classroom practices. The report further states that this is due to inadequate staffing and funding of Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs), where these teachers are trained, and lack of continuous professional development (CPD) courses that could empower them with conventional pedagogical skills and especially skills to teach early literary.

These views imply that children's literacy levels have continued to be low due to the inability to comprehend what they read in both the native language and English. They further indicate that strategies teachers use to teach reading may actually cause children to experience reading comprehension difficulties in both their native languages and English.

As a researcher, I critically read and analysed reports on reading of bilingual children in Uganda namely NAPE (2010; 2011); UNEB, (2011) and NCDC (2006) and found out that reading comprehension was a major challenge to bilingual children aged 6-8 years. I also realised that reading comprehension difficulties were experienced by bilingual children in the United States of America as indicated by the National Reading Panel (2000) and NAEP (2000) reports. Being an experienced primary school teacher as well as a teacher educator, I encountered the instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children as a challenge among primary school teachers while

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examining students both at primary and primary teachers' college levels. Hence these reasons compelled me to work in collaboration with primary three teachers and conduct a study to investigate the specific reading comprehension difficulties of bilingual children. The difficulties then directed us to establish a balanced reading instruction programme as a remedy teachers could use to improve their instruction first in the native language and then in English as well as children's reading comprehension.

1.4 Problem statement

The intention of this study was to investigate, design, adapt and implement the balanced reading instruction programme as an intervention teachers could use to address reading comprehension difficulties of bilingual children in both their native language and English specifically in the Ugandan context. Through participatory action research (PAR), the study aimed to establish the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme in empowering teachers with strategies for improving their instruction as well as enhancing children with reading comprehension strategies in both the native language and English.

1.5 Research questions

The main question that framed this study was:

> ➢ How does the balanced reading instruction programme assist teachers to provide support for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children in the native language and in English?

The main question was addressed through the following sub-questions:

> ➢ Which components inform the design of the balanced reading instruction programme teachers can use in the instruction of reading comprehension of bilingual children?
> ➢ How do teachers respond to the balanced reading instruction programme?

> What effect does the balanced reading instruction programme have on children's reading comprehension in both their native language and in English?

1.6 Clarification of core concepts

1.6.1 Balanced reading instruction

Balanced reading instruction is a reading programme that addresses aspects of reading, namely phonological and phonemic awareness; alphabetic code; fluent reading of text; vocabulary knowledge; text comprehension; spelling and handwriting; frequent assessment of readers and engagement of readers in extensive reading (Learning First Alliance, 2000). Zygouris-Coe (2001) contends that teachers should emphasise direct and explicit teaching of phonemic and phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and instruction and comprehension strategies when using balanced reading instruction in their teaching of reading comprehension. Effective reading instruction, particularly of children with reading difficulties, should incorporate strategies that include:

> Systematic instruction that involves letter-sound correspondence and phonic skills development.

> Extended guided independent and cumulative practice whereby children are provided with sufficient time to individually practise the skills and strategies learnt.

> Engagement of students in reading different comprehension texts.

> Reading assessment procedures to obtain feedback on children's progress in reading comprehension (Denton, 2018).

Therefore, this study – in partnership with teachers – designed, adapted and implemented a balanced reading instruction programme that comprised

explicit teaching of phonological awareness, the alphabet principle, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, ongoing assessment as well as strategies and activities that teachers used to address reading comprehension difficulties of primary three bilingual children (Zygouris-Coe, 2001; Learning First Alliance, 2000).

1.6.2 Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is a cognitive and active process that derives meaning from a given text (Woolley, 2011). It is an interactive process that involves the reader, the text and the factors associated with reading to understand and effectively interpret the text (Habib, 2016; Lipka and Siegel, 2012). Snow (2002) argues that for the reader to construct meaning from a given text, the reader uses a combination of prior knowledge, previous experience, information in the text and the reader's attitude towards the text. For children to read and comprehend a given text, they need to decode and recognise by sight the words in the text, understand the meaning of words and sentences, relate the meaning of the sentences to the text, activate and use prior knowledge to infer meaning and understanding and continually monitor the understanding of the text (Mc Naughton and Mc Naughton, 2012).

Harvey (2013) asserts that for primary school students to comprehend what they read, they need to engage in activities for vocabulary development with regard to word identification, decoding and comprehension. They should also be taught reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualising, making inferences, activating prior knowledge and summarising ideas in the text.

Thus effective reading comprehension involves reading words and accessing their meanings, making sense of each sentence, integrating the meanings of successive sentences to establish coherence and fitting together the information in the text as a whole (Snowling, 2009).

In this study, I regard reading comprehension as a cognitive process that requires children to interact with different texts with the support of teachers in the classroom. This implies that teachers must involve children in different reading activities and use instructional strategies that enhance reading comprehension. The effectiveness of their reading comprehension will be manifested in the activities children in which are engaged.

1.6.3 Primary three

Primary three is the third class in the first cycle of the primary schools in Uganda, a cycle referred to as the lower primary classes. The cycle comprises primary one, two and three (6-8 years) (NCDC, 2007, p. 39). These are classes or grades where basic reading skills, such as reading comprehension, are taught to children in both their native languages and English (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2007, p. 7). Children in the third class (primary three, the final year of lower primary classes) are expected to use a variety of strategies to comprehend texts in different story books. In addition, these children should be able to read fluently and should have developed interest in reading story books written by specific authors for longer periods (Antonacci and O'Callaghan, 2004, p. 43-44).

1.6.4 Bilingual children

Gort (2014) describes bilingual children as those who are exposed to two languages in their early years, regardless of their proficiency in either language. Baker (2000, p. 86) states that children learn these two languages through their interaction with their parents, who are native language speakers. They can also learn a second or foreign language in addition to the native language in their neighbourhood or community through play groups or at school. Baker (2000, p. 87) postulates that there are two ways in which children become bilingual, namely sequential and simultaneous. Simultaneous bilingualism results when children acquire two languages at the same time early in their lives. Sequential bilingualism is

when children first learn the native language and then a second language at school.

In this study, bilingual children will refer to those who are learning their native language concurrently with English as a second language in the classroom and the school respectively.

1.7 Theoretical framework

The theories underpinning this study are Cummins' (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's (1984) empowerment theory. Although the two theories are "old", they are relevant to this study.

Linguistic interdependence assumes that attainment of language X is dependent on competence in language Y, provided there is instruction and adequate motivation for language Y (Gimenez, 2000). The theory implies that instruction and motivation are essential for bilingual speakers to acquire literacy skills in their first language which can support them to learn the second language faster. These literacy skills include phonological awareness, visualising, use of graphic organisers, vocabulary acquisition strategies and comprehension (Cummins, 2005). Cummins argues that bilingual children can attain literacy skills in their first language if they engage in activities that integrate context-embedded and context-reduced language tasks in addition to explicit instruction and motivation. Content-embedded tasks are tasks that enhance comprehension with the aid of visual cues such as pictures, illustrations and gestures, while context-reduced tasks require few visual cues to comprehend abstract concepts (Cummins, 2000, p. 35).

Rappaport's theory of empowerment entails empowering people through participation with others and collective action that enhances change. This participation can be at community level, where people are empowered to improve their way of life using the available resources, as well as at the individual level, to improve one's knowledge, skills and attitude when engaged in programmes or interventions (Zimmerman, 2000).

These two theories directed the formulation of the emerging theoretical and conceptual framework on which the design and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme for this study were posited. They also guided me as a researcher to explore research-based instructional strategies and activities from the literature teachers could use to improve their instruction as well as reading comprehension of children in both their native language and English.

1.8 Research design and methods

1.8.1 Research paradigm

This study used a critical qualitative research paradigm to investigate the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children in the Ugandan context. Neuman (2003, p. 81) asserts that critical qualitative researchers work in collaboration with participants primarily to reflect and improve on the phenomena under study in its natural setting. This research paradigm aims to obtain participants' views, opinions, behaviours and understanding of the phenomena through the use of focus group interview discussions, direct observation, and document data (Creswell, 2014). In this study teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension difficulties in both their native language and English were the phenomena addressed through the balanced reading instruction programme.

The critical qualitative approach enabled me to understand teachers' instructional practices and children's challenges in reading comprehension in their natural settings, which were the classroom context and the school respectively. The approach made it possible for me to work together with teacher participants to design, adapt, implement, reflect on and evaluate the balanced reading instruction programme with regard to teachers' improvement of their instruction and children's reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English.

1.8.2 Participatory action research (PAR)

Participatory action research was employed in this study. This research is an interactive process with an action-reflection cycle. The researcher and the participants jointly identify a problem in their practice and plan, implement and reflect on. Then they evaluate the action in order to improve their knowledge and practice (Eliana, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008, p.15). In this study the researcher worked in collaboration with four primary three teachers as participants and forty primary three bilingual children (indirect participants) in Nyakayojo primary school, Mbarara Municipality. This school was purposively chosen for this study because a large number of children in this school experienced reading comprehension difficulties in their native language (Runyankole) and English. This made it suitable for implementing the balanced reading instruction programme.

1.9 Data collection strategies

Strategies that were used to collect data on the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme in improving teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension included focus group interviews, observation, document analysis visual methods and my reflective journal. These strategies provided information that assisted me in presenting a rich and descriptive detailed data in order to answer the research questions.

1.9.1 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were utilised to collect information from teacher participants. The sessions were guided by a focus group discussion guide that comprised open-ended questions (Krueger, 2002) formulated from the literature review (see guide in Addendum CD 1). The interviews enabled me to gather high-quality information from the participants in an interactive and relaxed context (Patton, 2002, p. 386). The discussion sessions were video recorded and then transcribed.

1.9.2 Observation

Opie (2004, p. 122) points out that observation as a data collection strategy assists the researcher to obtain information participants might not be willing to talk about in interviews. I used this strategy to observe lessons taught by teachers in their classrooms while using the strategies and components of the balanced reading instruction programme at different phases of its implementation. I noted my lesson observations in the researcher's reflective journal. The observed lessons were also video recorded and then transcribed (see Addendum 2, DVD 11). While observing the lessons, I played the role of an observer as participant and also informed the teachers and children about my activities in these lessons (Kawulich, 2005; Opie, 2004, p. 128).

1.9.3 Document analysis

Owen (2014) points out that document analysis deals with analysing documents in order to gather information on a particular subject under study. In this study, the documents from which I gathered information about the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme in teachers' instruction included teachers' lesson plan books, children's activity books and assessment sheets. I analysed teachers' lesson plans in order to obtain feedback on their preparations and usage of the strategies and activities as planned in the different phases of the balanced reading instruction programme. Analysis of children's activity books and assessment provided data on feedback about teachers' instruction of the aspects of reading comprehension and children's progress. Data from these documents was also used as excerpts in the data analysis and presentation of findings phase in order to strengthen the study and thus increase its trustworthiness and credibility.

1.9.4 Visual methods

Visual methods are a qualitative data collection strategy that entails gathering information about participants' behaviour and emotions through photographs, videos, maps diagram and symbols (Phoenix, 2010). In this study I made use of a digital camera for photographs and a video recorder. I took photographs of teachers as they explicitly taught children reading comprehension in both in Runyankole and English in the classroom. In addition, the lessons that I observed were videotaped. The photographs and video recordings assisted me to gather information about teacher participants' reactions that could not be expressed verbally during the focus group interviews and reflections. For instance, the photographs brought out participants' facial expressions, such as smiling to indicate that they were happy. This data also enriched the data I obtained from the interviews and observation and thus increased the trustworthiness of my findings through member checking (Glaw, Inder, Kable and Hazelton, 2017).

1.9.5 Researcher's reflective journal

Data was also collected using a reflective journal. The data collected in the reflective journal included my reflections on the entire process of the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. It also contained notes on reflective sessions held at different phases of the programme. In these reflective sessions, the researcher and teacher participants shared their views on strategies well utilised in their instruction, challenges faced and how they were dealt with by adapting the programme, and children's progress in reading comprehension (see Addendum 4, DVD 1). Lesson observations were also written in the researcher's reflective journal under the heading of field notes. This data was analysed and enabled me to present the findings of the study with minimal researcher bias (Anney, 2014).

As a researcher, I played the role of a participant observer, immersing myself in observing and listening to teachers' interactions with children during their reading comprehension lessons (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006, p. 86-87).

1.10 Data analysis

I used content analysis and inductive analysis strategies. Content analysis was used to analyse videotaped data of focus group interviews, lesson observations and data analysed from documents (Maryring, 2000). Content analysis units were also used to identify and group data into similar patterns across the interviews, lesson observations and data from documents.

Inductive analysis was used to establish recurring similar ideas, opinions and responses across all data from focus group interviews, lesson observations, documents and the reflective journal. Similar groups of data were then integrated and categorised into themes and sub-themes (Creswell, 2007, p.37-38). The data analysis was done in accordance with the research topic, questions and methodology of the study.

1.11 Rigour and trustworthiness

Creswell (2014) contends that qualitative researchers ought to maintain rigour and trustworthiness in their projects through the use of different strategies such as multiple data collection methods, rich thick descriptions of data and prolonged time in the field. In order to maintain rigour and trustworthiness in my study, I used focus group interviews, observation and document analysis as methods to collect data. In addition, a researcher's reflective journal was used to record all the activities that took place throughout the research process, including lesson observations recorded as field notes and my personal reflections. I also spent six months in the field working together with teachers specifically for primary three in Nyakayojo primary school, Mbarara Municipality.

1.12 Ethical considerations

I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria before the commencement of data collection in the field. Thereafter, I sought permission from the principal education officer, Mbarara Municipality and the head teachers of Nyakayojo primary school in order to gain access to the school, teachers and children. Creswell (2014) points out that for researchers to obtain approval of individuals in authority to access the study sites and participants, they need to write letters specifying the purpose of the research, duration and its outcomes. I prepared the letters of permission for the education officer and the head teacher and the informed consent forms for the participants (the teachers of primary three classes) well in advance for approval by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria.

The consent forms contained information about the nature and proceedings of the research project and participants' roles in the study (Creswell, 2007). The teachers were informed that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time and that their identity would not be revealed. The teachers completed and signed the consent forms as evidence for their consent to participate in the study. They also consented to be photographed while they participated in different activities of the programme. The children were not given assent forms, since they were indirect participants in the study.

1.13 Role of the researcher

Being an experienced primary school teacher and a teacher educator, I worked in partnership with primary three teachers to implement the balanced reading instruction programme in Nyakayojo primary school. However, as a researcher I needed to be as unbiased as possible and to try to remain objective throughout the study. Noting my personal feelings in the reflective journal assisted me in this regard, as noted by Anney, 2014). I

also played the role of a moderator during the focus group interview sessions, using pauses, probing and subtle group control in order to encourage all the participants to participate in the discussion (Krueger, 2002).

1.14 Outline and organisation of the study

The study is organised in six chapters, as outlined below.

Chapter one introduces the study. It further presents the background to the study, rationale, problem statement and research questions. Key concepts are explained in detail. Lastly, the chapter provides an outline and organisation of the thesis.

Chapter two provides a critical analysis of the relevant national and international literature. The chapter explains reading comprehension in early literacy and the difficulties experienced by bilingual children. Research-based strategies for improving children's reading comprehension are also explained. Balanced reading instruction, which forms the basis of the enquiry, is described in terms of its components and relevance to improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The emerging theoretical and conceptual framework is presented in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter three describes the research paradigm, research methodology, data collection and data analysis strategies. The rationale for using these strategies in this study is explained. The context of the study, rigour and trustworthiness, ethics considerations and the role of the researcher are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. It further discusses the content, activities and data

collection strategies that were used in different implementation phases of the programme. Implementation challenges and recommendations of the research team are also highlighted.

Chapter five reports the findings of data analysis. The key themes with their sub-themes that emerged from the data are discussed.

Chapter six discusses the findings with reference to the literature, research questions and conceptual framework. Recommendations, my contribution to knowledge and reflections on the programme as well as limitations of the study are addressed in this chapter.

1.15 Summary

This chapter provided the introduction and background to the study. It spelt out the rationale, purpose statement and research questions. Key concepts with regard to the balanced reading instruction programme were clarified. Finally, the chapter outlined the structure and organisation of the thesis. The next chapter presents a review of the literature on the balanced reading instruction for improving the reading comprehension of bilingual children.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the literature on both the international and national research published from 1984 to 2017 that is relevant to my study. The literature on balanced reading instruction for improving reading comprehension to bilingual children was critically examined in terms of primary focus, major findings, strengths and limitations.

Firstly, this chapter discusses reading comprehension and the difficulties with which it confronts bilingual children. Secondly, it examines research-based strategies that have proven to be successful in improving children's reading comprehension, especially through balanced reading instruction. Thirdly, the theories that directed the formulation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study are discussed in detail. Lastly, the theoretical and conceptual framework is described in relation to the balanced reading instruction programme of this research project for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The implementation of the programme is dealt with in detail in chapter four.

2.2 Reading comprehension in early literacy

Reading comprehension ought to be developed in children during early literacy instruction. Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2004, p. 110-111) state that early literacy is a stage when young children of grades one to three begin to develop confidence in abilities to read and write, gain skills in oral language and the ability to segment sounds and to read strategically. Rosco, Christie and Richgels (2003) argue that oral language comprehension, phonological

awareness and print knowledge need to be emphasised during early literacy instruction. This could be enhanced by engaging children in phonological awareness and alphabet activities as well as reading stories for meaning.

Reading comprehension is a process where readers construct meaning from a given text using a combination of prior knowledge, previous experience, information from the text and the reader's attitude towards the text. It involves deriving meaning from words, sentences, paragraphs and the text as a whole (Pardo, 2004). Therefore it requires readers to have the ability to identify and understand how ideas are related in the text, making inferences between clauses and sentences and those not necessarily intended by the author as well as summarising what has been read (Irwin, 2007, p. 10; Pardo, 2004; Oakhill and Cain, 2004). Mkhwanazi (2012) asserts that the application of prior knowledge or background knowledge, making predictions about the text and questioning are some of the indicators of children's acquisition of reading comprehension. However, children need to be engaged in various activities such as brainstorming, asking questions to reinforce predictions and topic talking to support them in developing comprehension skills.

Reading comprehension is influenced by the reader's characteristics, which include the reader's basic language skills, decoding skills, background knowledge about the context and text, the reader's cognitive ability to evaluate the text in different ways and motivation (Irwin, 2007, p. 7; Pardo, 2004). The reader's culture in relation to the culture espoused in the text as well as the reader's reason for reading also affects the comprehension process (Pardo, 2004). This implies that despite being a complex process, reading comprehension should be developed in children through explicit reading instruction (Sporer, Brustein and Kieschke, 2009; Pardo, 2004).

Shahalan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider and Torgesen (2010) contend that building young children's capacity to comprehend what they read in a given text requires them to obtain various skills and knowledge. These could be word-level skills whereby children are to identify or decode words in the text accurately and fluently. Children could also make use of vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills to enable them to understand the meaning of words and connected texts. Broad conceptual knowledge can be drawn from different disciplines of the school curriculum, such as Social Studies and Science. Knowledge and abilities are required specifically for understanding different ways in which texts can be structured and the ability to use a repertoire of cognitive strategies. Thinking and reasoning skills – making inferences, questioning and summarising – are essential for reading comprehension.

Shahalan et al. (2010), however, point out that reading comprehension requires teachers to give explicit instruction as well as engaging young children in hands-on activities that will create learning opportunities which in turn will prompt children to use a combination of skills and knowledge to understand the texts read. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) postulate that direct instruction in reading requires that children use reading to obtain meaning from print, have frequent and intensive opportunities to read, are exposed to frequent regular sound relationships and learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system as well as the structure of speech.

The above researchers point out that reading comprehension is essential for children in early grades of their schooling; the fundamentals of reading ought to be explicitly taught to children for them to attain reading comprehension. This implies that for children to obtain skills for reading comprehension, they should be given instruction and opportunities to participate in a variety of reading activities. With regard to this study, I worked in partnership with teachers to investigate whether explicit

instruction could inculcate skills for reading comprehension in bilingual children through the activities of the balanced reading instruction programme.

2.3 Reading comprehension difficulties in bilingual children

Snow, Burns and Griffins (1998, p. 2) state that children's journey towards becoming skilled readers is hindered mainly by difficulties in understanding and using the alphabetic principle, which involves written spelling to systematically represent spoken words, transfer of comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and acquisition of strategies specifically needed for reading different texts. Nation (2004) asserts that children with poor reading comprehension experience difficulties either in decoding or linguistic comprehension (phonological processing, lexical and semantic processing) or both.

In their study carried out among 101 children in six schools of middle-class catchment areas of the United Kingdom, Cain and Oakhill (2006) found that poor comprehenders with weak vocabulary skills and poor cognitive ability were vulnerable to impaired growth in word reading and reading comprehension. The findings also showed that poor comprehenders performed more poorly than their peers in other areas of the educational curriculum than English. Cain and Oakhill (2004) point out that when such comprehension difficulties are identified, they should inform the intervention studies to provide strategies for not only improving children's reading comprehension, but also understanding the skills that enhance reading comprehension. The findings apply to comprehension challenges generally experienced by children who are poor readers of English, but not specifically to bilingual children, who are the focus of this study. Therefore, this study was purposely carried out to establish specific reading comprehension difficulties of bilingual children that required balanced reading instruction programme as an intervention.

2.4 Research-based strategies for improving children's reading comprehension

McShane (2005) states that research-based strategies are practices that have proven to be successful in improving children's reading achievement through evidence-based research. This section explains the strategies that have been found to be effective in improving children's reading comprehension that could be utilised in the proposed programme dealing with teachers' instruction.

2.4.1 Scaffolding children's reading comprehension

Clark and Graves (2004) state that scaffolding is an effective strategy a teacher can use to improve children's reading comprehension. Scaffolding is defined as a special kind of temporary assistance the teacher offers to learners to move towards new skills, concepts or levels of understanding. The learners can then later apply the concepts, skills and understanding to complete a similar task on their own (Gibbons, 2002, p. 11).

Clark and Graves (2004) suggest three types of scaffolding that can be used to support children's reading comprehension. Moment-to-moment verbal scaffolding is whereby carefully graded questions are asked to prompt children to refine their understanding of the text being read. Instructional framework scaffolding fosters content by questioning the author. Scaffolded reading experience and instructional strategies promote reading independence among children and engage them in supported practice with multiple texts. These researchers suggest that when scaffolding is well utilised by teachers in their instruction, it improves children' reading comprehension. In line with this study, scaffolding was incorporated in the balanced reading instruction programme as one of the strategies teachers could use to teach reading comprehension to bilingual children.

2.4.2 Collaborative Strategic Reading

Klinguer and Vaughn (1999) state that collaborative strategic reading (CSR) combine reading comprehension strategy and cooperative learning. This strategy involves grouping learners of mixed reading and achievement levels in small groups so that they can assist one another in applying reading strategies in a given text. The reading strategies are *previewing*, which requires children to recall what they already know about the text and predict what the text is all about and *click and clunk,* whereby learners identify difficult words and concepts and find their meanings using sentences, phrases and clues in the text. *Getting the gist* involves restating the most important idea in a paragraph and in *wrapping up* the learners summarise what they have learnt in the text (Klinguer and Vaughn, 1999).

By using children's experiences in a dialogue and using CSR in the teaching of reading comprehension, Klinguer and Vaughn (1999) found that children had made progress in reading comprehension, vocabulary and test scores, even though they were at different achievement levels and were learning English as a second language. Dole (2006) confirms that CSR is a good strategy that teaches children specific comprehension strategies that can assist them to understand different types of texts, such as expository, informational and narrative texts. In this study, I adapted reading strategies of CSR in the programme so that teachers could use them while teaching reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children.

2.4.3 Reciprocal Teaching

Dole (2006) states that reciprocal teaching (RT) is an instructional practice aimed at equipping children with strategies that help them to improve their reading comprehension. These strategies include summarising the text, generating questions about the text, clarifying word meanings and confusing text passages and predicting what is likely to come next in the text (Dole, 2006; Clark and Graves, 2004). During the teaching of reading

comprehension, the teacher discusses guides and models the strategies to children as they read given text in their small groups. The comprehension strategies enable children to understand the purpose of reading, to activate knowledge, to focus attention on important content, to cortically evaluate the text, to monitor their comprehension and to draw inferences (Clark and Graves, 2004).

In their study carried out among 200 third- to sixth-grade elementary students in public schools of a medium-sized German town, Sporer, Brunstein and Kieschke (2009) found that RT strategies improved students' reading comprehension, especially the ability to summarise text. The findings also showed that explicit instruction is a feasible tool that enhances students' reading comprehension. In the study, I integrated RT in the balanced reading instruction programme, specifically the aspect where the teacher discusses, guides and models the strategies to children as they read the given text in their small groups in order to improve their reading comprehension.

2.4.4 Literacy engagement

Literacy engagement is also a practice teachers could use in their instruction in early literacy to improve children's reading comprehension. Literacy engagement should be emphasized in the early stages of reading, particularly if children's access to printed matter outside the school environment is limited. This will not only improve children's word reading and fluency, but also cultivate their interest in reading and awareness of how meaning is derived from the text (Cummins, 2011).

This is confirmed by the study conducted by the National Reading Panel (2000) on language minority children in the USA. This study found that children from families with a low income and low education who were exposed to printed matter and highly engaged in reading at school

performed much better than those from backgrounds with a higher education and income. Cummins (2011) proposes that literacy engagement and access to printed matter should be incorporated in the reading instruction and policies in order to promote children's reading comprehension and their academic development. Therefore, this study also included literacy engagement in the intended programme since children, as indirect participants, came from low socio-economic families and lacked sufficient exposure to a variety of reading materials.

2.4.5 Extensive reading practice

Extensive reading practice improves children's reading comprehension. In their study, Shany and Biemiller (2009) found that extensive reading practice significantly improved reading comprehension among grade three and four children in the elementary school in a disadvantaged downtown area of a major Canadian city. The study was conducted over sixteen weeks among twenty-nine children, fourteen of whom faced reading comprehension difficulties and fifteen were moderate in reading comprehension. The findings not only showed that extensive reading improved reading comprehension, but also improved reading fluency and vocabulary. This study suggests that children need to be exposed to a lot of reading materials (picture story books, rhymes and song books and poetry books), regardless of their home literacy background, in order to improve their reading comprehension. Therefore, this study incorporated extensive literacy practice lessons in the instruction of reading comprehension during the implementation of the programme. During these lessons, the teachers engaged children in reading a variety of storybooks written in Runyankole and English.

2.4.6 Interactive think-aloud strategy

Interactive think-aloud is a multiple strategy instruction developed by Oczkus (2009, p. 14) This strategy aims to improve students' reading

comprehension strategies such as making connections, predicting, inferring, questioning, monitoring, summarising, synthesising and evaluating. The strategies include scaffolding students' reading, asking questions, reading aloud, interactive guided practice and independent practice (Oczkus, 2009, p. 17-19). She further states that the think-aloud strategy can be used to teach reading comprehension to students at different levels, including those in the early literacy stage, where teaching phonemic awareness, phonics and comprehension skills are emphasised.

The strategies discussed above emphasize improving reading comprehension of students whom English is a second language. However, the teacher's expertise in applying the strategies in their instruction is paramount for students to attain improvement in reading comprehension. Therefore, this study sought to investigate whether these strategies could also be used by teachers to support children improve their reading comprehension in their native language (Runyankole) and English.

2.5 Balanced reading instruction

Balanced reading instruction is a comprehensive strategy whereby children are taught explicitly, systematically and consistently how to understand and use the structure of language as well as constructing meaning from different texts. In balanced reading instruction, children's phonemic awareness skills, decoding skills and comprehension skills are developed (Zygouris-Coe 2001; Kelly, 1997). Balanced reading instruction requires teachers to give direct, explicit instruction in reading comprehension, with emphasis on phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Teachers also ought to constantly reflect on and modify their instruction in accordance with the needs of their learners (Chou, Wang and Ching, 2012; Moats, 2000).

Chou et al. (2012) confirm that balanced reading instruction has proven to improve children's reading comprehension as well as their attitude towards learning English. In their study carried out among fifteen first-grade children in an Elementary English school in Tapei, Taiwan, Chou et al (2012) found that children demonstrated adequate progress and confidence in fluent reading, greater increased sight vocabulary, improved ability to use cues and strategies, better phonemic awareness and ability to use phonics, improved reading comprehension and an improved attitude towards reading. Similarly, in her study conducted among ten second-grade children identified as underachievers in reading at "Historia" (pseudonym) elementary school in the south-eastern USA, Duffy (2001) found that balanced reading instruction improved these children's word identification abilities and reading comprehension abilities (understanding what the students read). The learners not only improved their reading comprehension, but also developed a positive attitude towards reading and themselves as readers. These researchers agree that balanced reading instruction improves reading comprehension for struggling readers of English. Therefore, this study adapted the balanced reading instruction for Ugandan bilingual learners, in particular primary three children of Nyakayojo primary school, who also experienced difficulties in their reading comprehension, to rectify the challenges of reading comprehension in both their native language and English.

Wharton-Macdonald, Pressley and Mistretta (1998) point out that during the implementation of balanced reading instruction, teachers need to make use of small, ability-group instruction. Pikulski (1997) asserts that for children experiencing reading comprehension difficulties, small groups should comprise at least seven children per group. This size of the group gives learners opportunities to respond and receive feedback from their teachers. Teachers will also have sufficient time for direct instruction that will support leaners to make steady and significant progress in their reading. Zygouris-

Coe (2001) argues that strategies such as phonics instruction, reading aloud, independent reading and silent reading should be incorporated in balanced reading instruction. Formal and informal ongoing assessment should also be used by teachers in order to identify children who may not be progressing well and intervene with appropriate strategies. These strategies provide children with opportunities to engage in authentic, integrated reading and writing activities as well as practising strategies that help them to become good readers (Wharto-Macdonald et al., 1998; Pukulski, 1997).

Torgesen (2005) points out that an intervention such as balanced reading instruction requires teachers who are well trained and experienced in order to effectively implement the intervention measures incorporated in the programme. Torgesen (2005) further proposes that as researchers design and implement an effective intervention, they must to take into consideration the need for well-trained and experienced teachers who are persistent in their efforts not leave any child behind. These teachers should establish a reliable system that can identify children who need the intervention to improve their reading comprehension. They need to have meetings regularly in order to reflect on both children's achievements and the effectiveness of their intensive instruction.

Wren (2002) also affirms that good teachers who are dynamic, flexible, and respond to children's individual needs through the use of variety of instructional strategies, enhance children's reading in particular reading comprehension. The studies coherently emphasize that well-trained, and experienced, hardworking and committed teachers are a pivot to a successful reading instruction intervention for children with reading difficulties. For this study, I endeavoured to identify trained experienced and flexible primary three teachers with whom I worked to design, adapt and implement the balanced reading instruction as an intervention for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children.

2.5.1 Components that inform the design of balanced reading instruction

According to Zygouris-Coe (2001), balanced reading instruction comprises the following main components: phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension. These components are explicated in the next sections. I indicate the relation of each component to the programme of this study.

2.5.2 Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is concerned with the development of awareness of sounds of language. This concept involves identification and manipulation of sound structures in the spoken words of a particular language (Joubert, Bester and Meyer, 2013, p. 243; Garton and Pratt, 1998, p. 159). For children to master reading and writing processes, they must learn the correspondences between the individual sounds of the language, the phonemes and the letters that represent the sounds (Garton and Pratt, 1998, p. 159). Phonemic awareness is part of phonological awareness, which is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words and is linked directly to phonics, which relates sounds to letters they represent (Chou et al., 2012).

Kazuvire and Everatt (2005) found that phonological awareness skills which were integrated and taught in the Namibian schools in grades two to five were strong predictors of children's reading ability in both the Herero and English languages. Their findings also showed that children who were good at phonological processing were also more likely to be single-word readers, whichever language was considered. Although phonological awareness is an essential predictor of reading comprehension, children ought to be explicitly taught individual sounds so that they become aware that words are made of individual speech sounds (Swanson, Rosston, Gerber and Solari, 2008; Antonacci and O'Callagan, 2004, p. 47).

The authors quoted above regard phonological awareness as a fundamental aspect that supports reading comprehension and should be taught to learners. Therefore, phonological awareness was incorporated in the programme to be explicitly taught to bilingual children.

2.5.3 Alphabet knowledge

Alphabet knowledge is concerned with recognising and naming letters, both upper and lower case, and knowing the sounds they represent. Learners need to know the sounds that are associated with each letter or with groups of letters. They also need to know that sounds map onto the printed letters (Antonacci and O'Callaghan, 2004, p. 48). This can be achieved through direct instruction. In their study among 285 first- and second- grade children in 19 elementary primary schools in Arizona on the effectiveness of direct instruction in letter-sound correspondence, Foorman, Fletcher, Francis and Schatschneider (1998) found that children who were directly instructed in the alphabetic principle improved in word reading skill at a significantly faster rate than those who were indirectly instructed in the alphabetic principle through exposure to literature. Their findings also established that explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle in the early grades could prevent reading difficulties among children from culturally and diverse linguistic backgrounds. Foorman et al. (1998), however, pointed out that follow-up of children is necessary for assessment of their gains in decoding skills as well as other aspects of the reading process.

The above studies indicate that explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle averts reading problems among bilingual children and improves their word building and reading. Therefore, it was imperative to integrate the alphabetic principle in the balanced reading instruction programme so as to enhance children's vocabulary in both Runyankole and English.

2.5.4 Vocabulary knowledge

Vocabulary knowledge encompasses understanding the breadth and the depth of vocabulary. The breadth of vocabulary refers to number of words the reader knows, while the depth of vocabulary refers to the multiple presentations of known words (Proctor, Uccelli, Dalton and Snow, 2009).

In his study of second-grade Cantonese who were learning English as a second language, Uchikoshi (2012) established that English vocabulary played a significant role in English word reading, listening comprehension and reading comprehension and was therefore a strong predictor of English reading comprehension. He concluded that those teachers whose children are learning English as a second language need to focus on vocabulary development during the literacy instruction, regardless of their children's native language. Oakhill and Cain (2004) state that good vocabulary supports the development of reading comprehension, whereas too many unknown words in a given text, disrupt reading for comprehension. This implies that vocabulary knowledge is paramount in children's reading comprehension; regardless of the language they are being taught. Therefore, vocabulary instruction was integrated into the balanced reading instruction programme to reinforce children's reading comprehension, first in their native language and then in English.

2.5.5 Comprehension

Comprehension is a process in which a reader chunks words into phrases and selectively recalls ideas in individual sentences, understands or infers relationships in terms of what is actually happening when a reader comprehends (Irwin, 2007, p. 3-7). Comprehension occurs at the word, sentence and passage levels; children must decode and know the meaning of words in order to comprehend what they read (Manset-Williamson and Nelson, 2005).

Au (2006, p. 98-105) argues that learners from diverse language backgrounds should receive explicit instruction in six comprehension strategies, namely predicting, drawing inferences, determining importance, summarising information, generating questions and monitoring comprehension. The explicit instruction should include teacher-directed instruction, explicit explanation which involves telling students exactly what they are to learn and why, modelling or demonstrating how the strategies are carried out, guided practice in the application of strategies, independent application of strategies and rich literature experiences (Au, 2006, p. 104-111; Manset-Williamson and Nelson, 2005). Oczkus (2009, p. 17-19) contends that comprehension strategies should be explicitly taught to students at all levels of the education system, including those in primary grades, to enable them to improve their reading comprehension.

The above researchers point out that explicit instruction in phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension is imperative for bilingual children. This will not only improve their reading comprehension, but also improve and sustain their reading skill at all levels of their education. Teachers should give intensive, explicit instruction on a daily basis for twenty to forty-five minutes to enable children to make steady and significant progress in their reading comprehension (Chou, 2012; Zygouris-Coe, 2001; Pukulski, 1997). Therefore, my study focused on explicit instruction of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension to primary three bilingual children during the implementation of the balanced reading instruction intervention. The study also focused on explicit instruction to primary three bilingual children on a daily basis for one hour.

2.5.6 Assessment

Assessment is described as a pedagogical and instructive practice that deals with gathering information about students' progress in learning in order to effectively identify their strengths and weaknesses (Habib, 2016). Assessment as a classroom activity is conducted for various purposes. Firstly, assessment is used to diagnose learners' difficulties and then determine appropriate instructional strategies and early interventions. Secondly, ongoing assessment provides feedback to teachers in order to improve their instruction and students' learning achievements. Lastly, information from assessment can be utilised as evidence of students' overall performance at the end of a period of instruction (Habib, 2016; Pearson and Ham, 2005).

With regard to children's reading comprehension, Pearson and Ham (2005) argue that diagnostic assessment should be used to identify children experiencing challenges in word identification and decoding and in reading comprehension. Oakley (2009) asserts that the use of ongoing classroom-based assessment enables children to show progress over a period of time in their use of cognitive strategies for reading comprehension. The ongoing assessment should therefore contain different tests with– multiple-choice, true-false judgements, sentence completion, answering open questions and retelling stories. The assessments should not only test comprehension, but also provide its evaluation through response formats (Snowling, 2009).

Evidently, assessment is an essential step in the improvement of teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension. Therefore, I incorporated baseline assessment to establish specific comprehension challenges experienced by bilingual children. Four assessment tests were designed as ongoing assessment for the researcher together with teachers to ascertain children's progress in reading comprehension during the implementation of the programme. Two post-assessment tests were included in the programme in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme with regard to

teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) and English.

The extensive review of the literature directed the strategies that were incorporated in the adapted balanced reading instruction as a programme for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children in Uganda, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Phonological awareness

Key strategies: phonics instruction; scaffolding/modelling; guided practice; extensive reading practice; literacy engagement; oral language/reading aloud; small-group instruction; assessment procedures; reading materials and activities

Alphabet knowledge

Key strategies: phonics instruction; scaffolding/modelling; guided practice; extensive reading practice; literacy engagement; oral language/reading aloud; small-group instruction; assessment procedures; reading materials and activities

Balanced reading instruction programme: Improved reading comprehension in Runyankole and English

Assessment

Comprehension

Key strategies: phonics instruction; scaffolding/modelling; guided practice; extensive reading practice; literacy engagement; oral language/reading aloud; small-group instruction; assessment procedures;

Vocabulary knowledge

Key strategies: phonics instruction; scaffolding/modelling; guided practice; extensive reading practice; literacy engagement; oral language/reading aloud; small-group instruction; assessment procedures;

Figure 2.1 Adapted strategies for the balanced reading instruction programme (Zygouris-Coe, 2001, p. 11-12)

2.6 Emerging theoretical and conceptual framework

This study employed aspects of Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's empowerment theory as the basis for designing and implementing a balanced reading instruction programme as an intervention for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis was used because instruction in reading comprehension in both the native language and English is vital to their academic content development at school (Benson,

2002; Cummins, 2000, p. 33). The empowerment theory was also addressed, as teachers – who at the pivot of instruction – need expertise to support children to attain the comprehension skill (Torgesen, 2005; Wren, 2002). In the next sections, the theories and their relevance to this study are discussed in detail.

2.6.1 Cummins' (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis

Cummins (1981) formulated the interdependence hypothesis as follows:

"To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly." (Cummins, 2005, p.2)

In other words, the competence reached in a given language X is dependent on the competence reached in language Y provided there is enough input and motivation to learn language X. Thus, the linguistic competence of bilingual speakers is considered as interdependent (Gimenez, 2000). Cummins (2005, p. 4-5) asserts that though the surface aspects of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages. This common underlying proficiency makes it possible for cognitive/ academic or literacy-related proficiency to be transferred from one language to another. In bilingual education contexts, this common underlying proficiency refers to the cognitive /academic knowledge and abilities that underlie academic performance in both languages. Cummins further identifies five types of transfer of literacy-related proficiency:

➢ Transfer of conceptual elements, i.e. of the meaning of concepts.
➢ Transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies such as strategies of visualising, use of graphic organisers, vocabulary acquisition strategies).

- ➢ Transfer of pragmatic aspects of language use, for example abilities to use paralinguistic features such as gestures to aid communication.
- ➢ Transfer of specific linguistic elements (meaning of words).
- ➢ Transfer of phonological awareness (knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds (Cummins, 2005, p. 3).

The implication of this theory is that direct instruction of reading to bilingual children in the native language is important for them to acquire literacy skills, in particular reading comprehension, which could accelerate their learning of the second language.

Cummins (1984) states that there are two types of language proficiency that need to be understood by teachers who teach bilingual children, namely basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) are skills needed for social interaction. BICS are manifested through social contexts, such as parties and sport, where people engage in conversations and informal interactions. The Social clues such as eye contact, facial expressions, voice cues, intonations and observing other peoples' reactions greatly facilitate communication of meaning (Cummins, 2000, p. 35).

Cummins (1984) describes cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as the language necessary for formal academic learning, which is essential for students to succeed at school. CALP includes listening, speaking, reading and writing about subject area contents. CALP emphasizes understanding of the content area, vocabulary as well as attaining skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesising, evaluating and inferring. CALP is characterised by abstract academic language, high literacy demand, context-reduced language and linguistic knowledge for comprehension (Bilash, 2009).

Cummins (1984) contrasted the two kinds of proficiency in terms of cognitive demand and context embeddedness. In the case of BICS, language tasks are less cognitively demanding, as they are embedded in contexts. In

other words, understanding and interpreting of the language tasks is supported by stress and intonation patterns in speech, gestures, facial expressions and visual supports.

On other hand, language tasks for CALP are cognitively demanding and context reduced. In this case the language tasks have abstract concepts, specialised vocabulary, more complex language structures and fewer non-verbal cues. The language tasks tend to be difficult to children, since the meanings are encoded exclusively in the language itself, with few linguistic cues. Nevertheless, cognitively demanding language tasks are essential for bilingual students to enable them to achieve academic success in school (Bilash, 2009).

Cummins further explains that a context-embedded language task is one in which learners have access to contextual clues from the environment, such as objects, pictures, graphs and charts, to enhance comprehension. A context-reduced language task is one where there are few clues present to support comprehension other than the language itself, for example a reading text. Thus, in the instruction of language to bilingual learners teachers ought to first engage students in tasks accompanied by visual cues or other support derived from their experiences. These cues will help children comprehend the given tasks. Once the students are comfortable with these kinds of tasks, they can gradually be exposed to tasks that are both cognitively demanding and context reduced (Bilash, 2009).

Cummins (2000, p. 273) recommends that when developing cognitive academic language proficiency among bilingual children, teachers should make use of the comprehensible input strategy. This strategy involves the teaching of reading comprehension as the teachers interact with students on a given text. The interaction involves the use of students' prior knowledge; asking questions about the information contained in the text; deepening children's comprehension of the text in relation to their feelings and

experiences; drawing inferences from the text and the use of information in creating language texts (Cummins, 2000, p. 274).

Verhoeven (1994) contends that the interdependence hypothesis would predict that in a bilingual program, reading instruction in one language will not only lead to acquisition of literacy skills in that language but also to a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency. This linguistic proficiency is strongly related to literacy and general academic skills in the other language. He however, notes that in cases where the first language is not sufficiently developed outside school, high exposure to second language will hamper the first language from continuing to develop and will not stimulate successful bilingualism (in Durian, 2003).

In their study carried out among one hundred nine grade two children in the El Paso, Texas, enrolled in bilingual programs (both one-way and two-way programs), Krashen and Tinajero (2009) investigated whether the reading ability in the first language (Spanish) tested in grade two was associated with reading ability in the second language (English) tested four years later in grade six. Their findings showed that children, who read better in early grades in Spanish, read better in English later in grade six. These results provided a clear confirmation of the interdependence hypothesis that earlier performance in reading in the native language is related to subsequent performance in reading in the second language.

In another study in support of interdependence hypothesis, Verhoeven (1991) examined the process of biliteracy development of one hundred thirty eight first-grade Turkish children in Netherlands. One group of children was involved in an L2 submersion curriculum, which provided L2 literacy instruction before L1 literacy instruction. The other group of children followed the L1/L2 transition curriculum where literacy skills were first taught in L1. The findings showed that the submission group exhibited a strong transfer from earlier acquired decoding and reading comprehension

skills in L2 to later-acquired similar skills in L1. The L1/L2 transition group also demonstrated a positive transfer of L1 literacy skills similar skills in L2.

On the other hand, Grabe (2009, p. 141) points out that the linguistic interdependence hypothesis has a weakness of disregarding the importance of L2 language proficiency as not being critical to the development of L2 reading. Students can have weak L2 language proficiency but use all of their L1 academic reading skills to carry out L2 academic reading tasks successfully.

The implication of the theory is that during instruction of comprehension, teachers should make use of clues such as objects, pictures, illustrations and voice cues to support children understand what they read. Teachers should also engage bilingual children in various reading strategies and activities that enable them to derive meaning from the text since it is the essence of comprehension. Therefore, in line with my study the theory was a basis on which I identified reading activities and materials that were incorporated in the balanced reading instruction programme.

2.6.2 Rappaport's (1984) empowerment theory

Rappaport (1984) describes empowerment as a process and mechanism through which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives. Empowerment is an act through which people are given necessary tools that shape them into whole persons as well as their way of thinking and consciousness. Empowerment can be achieved through participation with others and collective action that promotes and encourages change (Ledwith, 2005; Zimmerman, 2000).

Empowerment theory is characterised by empowering processes and outcomes. Empowering processes refer to those that attempt to gain control, obtain the required resources and critically understand one's social environment. These could be; community involvement, shared leadership and decision making and media. Empowering outcomes refer to

operationalisation of empowerment such as interventions that are planned to empower participants. The empowerment theory can be applied at individual, organisation and community levels (Zimmerman, 2000; Rappaport, 1987). In the context of this study, I used empowerment at individual level since my research was an intervention and involved teachers as individuals.

Empowerment at individual level is referred to as psychological empowerment or personal empowerment. Psychological empowerment includes; experiences that exert control through participation in decision-making or problem-solving in ones' immediate environment. This can be achieved as individuals participate in different activities at their work places. While participating in these activities, individuals apply cognitive skills such as decision making, manage resources and work with others. Consequently, they are empowered in terms of sense of control, critical awareness and participatory behaviours (Zimmerman, 2000). Keiffer (1984) advanced that personal empowerment process undergoes four stages namely;

➢ Entry stage (an act of provocation) whereby participant's experience is threatened by some event or condition;
➢ Advancement stage which involves a mentoring relationship, supportive peer relationship with a collective organisation, and development of critical understanding of social and political relations;
➢ Incorporation stage that involves the development of a growing consciousness;
➢ Commitment stage whereby participants apply the new participation to ever expanding areas of their lives (Lord and Hutchison, 1993).

Using the aspects of these two theories Cummins' Linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's empowerment theory, I formulated the theoretical and conceptual framework that directed the design and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme as illustrated in Figure 2.2.
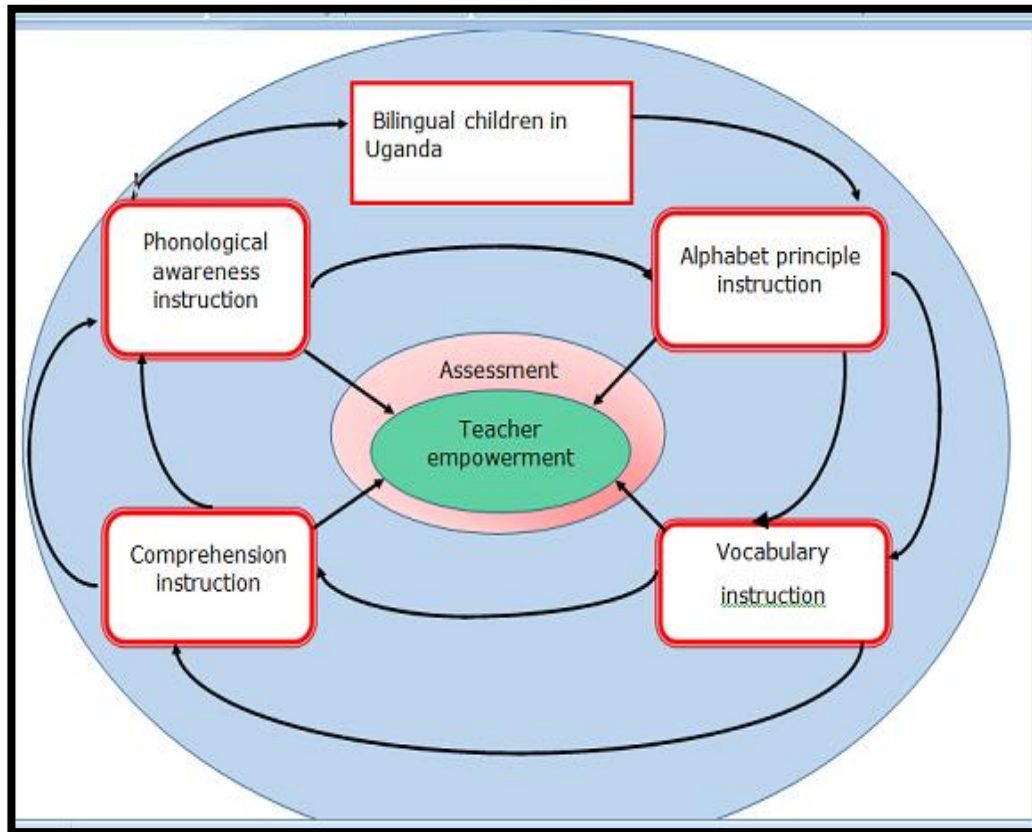
Figure 2.2 Theoretical and conceptual framework of the balanced reading instruction programme

The conceptual framework model in Figure 2.2 is used to explain the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of primary three children in Uganda. The blue circle represents the programme with its components indicated in the four rectangles (white). The arrows in the blue circle represent children in the background as recipients as well as indirect participants of the programme. The red circle represents the assessment procedures for children as means of feedback with regard to teachers' instruction and their progress in reading comprehension.

The green circle represents the teachers who are at the centre of the programme. The teachers are the ones to undergo the stages of empowerment process (entry, advancement, incorporation and

commitment) in order to obtain the strategies, self-esteem and confidence in teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children. And thus be empowered to effect improvement of reading comprehension for children under the programme.

The arrows (black) indicate instruction to be done in every component of the programme with emphasis being put on empowering the teachers. The arrows also show the nature of the conceptual framework and how the different components (blocks red and green circles) are interrelated and influencing each other.

2.7 Summary

This chapter provided a literature review on the description of reading comprehension and reading comprehension difficulties among children. The chapter explored the literature and identified balanced reading instruction which could be adapted and implemented as a programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children in the Uganda context. In this chapter strategies that could be incorporated in the balanced reading instruction were also explored. Finally, Cummins' Linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's empowerment theories were identified from the literature and used as the basis for understanding and formulating the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study. In the next chapter, the research and methodological process for this study are discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, Cummins' (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's (1984) empowerment theories were explored from the literature `and used to formulate the emergent theoretical and conceptual framework of this study. This chapter describes the research paradigm and design that directed the strategies for data collection and analysis. The chapter describes the context in which the study was conducted as well as the participants.

The chapter also spells out the way rigour and trustworthiness was maintained during data collection and my role as the researcher. Finally, the chapter describes data analysis strategies I utilised while identifying the findings of the study. The overview of the research design and methods is shown in figure 3.1 below.

| Research paradigm | → | Critical qualitative and interpretive |

| Research design | → | Participatory action research (PAR) |

| Research methods: data collection | → | • Focus group Interviews
• Direct observation and field notes
• Document analysis
• Reflective journal
• Video recordings and photos |

| Data collection sampling | → | Primary three teachers (direct participants): primary three children (indirect participants) |

| Data analysis

Data analysis process: transcribing of video-taped lesson observations and Focus Group interview sessions | → | Researcher
• Content analysis
• Inductive analysis
• Coding
• Categories
• Themes and sub-themes |

Figure 3.1 Summary of the research methodology process (Adapted from Chabilall, 2010)

3.2 Research paradigm

This study employed a critical qualitative research paradigm in attempting to understand how the balanced reading instruction programme could assist teachers to provide support for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. Neuman (2003, p. 81) argues that critical qualitative researchers conduct their studies in order to critique and transform social relations with an intention of empowering people and helping them to change the world for themselves. Researchers who engage in critical qualitative research are action-oriented and work in collaboration with participants to question, reflect on the phenomena under study and try to change or improve the situation (Creswell, 2014; Cohen and Crabtree, 2006; Neuman, 2003, p. 82). This paradigm being qualitative in nature; its

researchers also focus on a single concept of the phenomenon and immerse themselves in its natural setting. As they immerse themselves in the natural setting, the researchers take into account participants' views, attitudes and opinions, behaviours and understanding in order to obtain in-depth and rich information about the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002, p. 39-41; Maxwell, 1996, p. 17-19).

In regard to my study, critical qualitative research guided me to interpret and understand the teacher participants' reactions on children's reading comprehension difficulties, their instruction and participation in the balanced reading instruction programme. This paradigm also assisted me to establish one school as a natural setting in which reading comprehension was a major challenge to primary three bilingual children that required an intervention programme. In this school, I worked in collaboration with primary three teachers as research participants to design, adapt, implement and evaluate the balanced reading instruction programme that could empower them with strategies to improve reading comprehension of bilingual children in the Ugandan context. The approach assisted me to not only to interpret and understand in detail specific children's reading comprehension difficulties but also to work with teachers and identify ways of using their environment to improve their bilingual children's reading comprehension.

While conducting my research in this school for six months, I gathered information about teachers' views and attitude with regard to their participation in the programme. This was done through focus group interviews, observing lessons where teachers applied the strategies of the programme and activities given to children as feedback of their instruction. In addition, I kept my reflective journal in which I noted down all my experiences and observations as the programme progressed.

3.3 Research methods

The selection of a research design depends on the research question, researcher's personal experience and the people to whom the findings will be disseminated. The research design provides a specific direction of the study and the strategies for conducting the inquiry. In addition the research design can be qualitative, quantitative or mixed depending on the nature of the study (Creswell, 2014). In the case of my study, I decided to use participatory action research (PAR) as qualitative research since my research question was on in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme. The research question and its sub-questions was; How does the balanced reading instruction programme assist teachers to provide support for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children in the native language and in English?; Which components inform the design of the balanced reading instruction programme teachers can use in the instruction of reading comprehension of bilingual children?; How do teachers respond to the balanced reading instruction programme?; What effect does the balanced reading instruction programme have on children's reading comprehension in both the native language and English?

3.3.1 Participatory action research

Participatory action research is a sub-set of action research whereby its researchers work in collaboration with the participants to make decisions and act on them and the collect information to effect change on social or environmental issues (Gaffney, 2008; Pain, Whitman and Milledge, 2007). In line with my study the change is the improvement of reading comprehension which is a challenge to teachers of bilingual children in the Ugandan context.

PAR shares similar attributes with action research. And thus, action research is described as a process whereby practitioners review their current practice; identify an aspect that needs improvement; identify a possible remedy and

try it out while collecting information and then modify their practice in accordance to the modified action (Mc Niff and Whitehead, 2002).

This process undergoes an action-reflection cycle that involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Gaffney, 2008). Action research aims at generating knowledge that leads to improvement through people's experiences and participation in the phenomenon under study. Its attributes include; being practical or action-oriented, participatory, collective outcome based indicated by improvement or change in practice (Mc Niff and Whitehead, 2002).

Similarly, PAR follows a cyclic and interactive process that undergoes action-reflection cycle. This process begins with identifying or diagnosing the problem; planning for a change or action; acting and observing the processes and consequences of change; reflecting on these processes and consequences; re-planning, acting and observing again; reflecting again and evaluating (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 2007; Mc Niff and Whitehead 2002). As researchers engage themselves in the PAR cycles, they improve their knowledge, understanding and implement the change in accordance to data findings (Eliana, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008, p. 15). Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2007) state that the success of PAR is not whether the participants have faithfully followed the cycles but rather they have obtained a strong and authentic sense of development and progress or improvement in their practices.

The implication of the above views is that researchers who utilise PAR in their study ought to make use of its action-reflective cycles while collecting data, work in collaboration with the participants in their natural setting purposely to change or improve their practices. Hence in this tudy, in collaboration with teacher participants, we identified children's reading comprehrension in both their native language and english as a challenge in our instruction which needed to be rectified. We then designed and adapted the balanced reading insturction programme as an intervention which was

implemented in accordance to PAR cycles in Nyakayojo primary school as teachers' school setting.
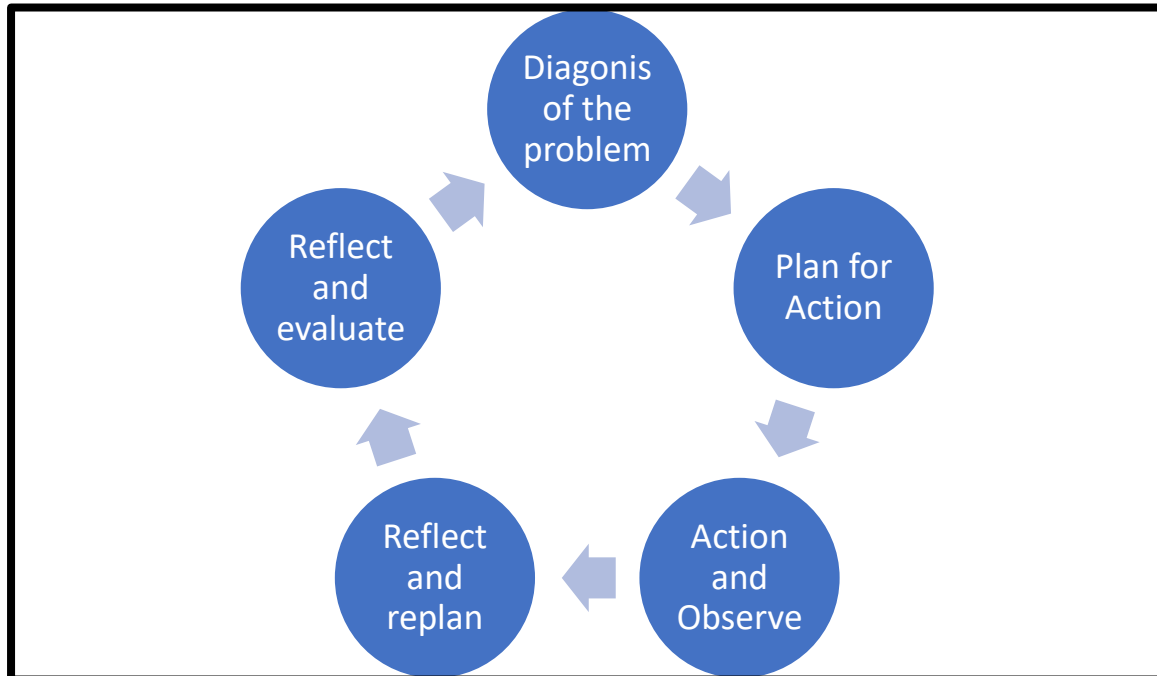
Figure 3.2 PAR action-reflection cycle (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 2007, p.278)

Pain et al. (2007) assert that PAR as an action research is driven by; a democratic model in which people can produce, own and use knowledge; participants who have a stake in the phenomena being researched; participants' collaboration and working together at every stage of the research and result-oriented in action, change or improvement.

The primary objective of PAR is to leave its participants motivated and and energized in order to act on the modified change or improvement. This is done through involving them in the study that enables them to improve on their practice. Researchers of PAR also focus on investigating the phenomenon under study within its natural setting for instance a community or a school (Eliana, Milnkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008, p. 11).

In regard to this study, the researcher engaged primary school teachers, who were teaching primary three children experiencing reading comprehension difficulties in the native language and English, in the design, adaptation and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. In addition the study was conducted in the school setting in the classrooms from which the teachers taught their bilingual children.

3.3.1.1 Participatory action reseach cycles

In this section, I decribe the cyclic process of PAR in relation to this study. During the diagnosis of the problem cycle, I worked in collaboration with four primary three teachers and identified reading comprehension as a challenge to primary three bilingual children. This was achieved through the administration of the baseline assessment test to primary three children which I designed in collaboration with the teachers. The specific content of the test comprised of letter sounds of the alphabet, words and sentences in Runyankole. Runyankole was used in the construction of the test since it is the children's native language as well as the medium of instruction in lower primary classes. In addition, the native language was appropriate in the construction and administration of the test for it would provide a template for language learning with regard to phonemes, word and grammatical structure identification that aid second language acquisition (Miller, Heilmann and Nockerts, 2006; Cummins, 2000, p. 24-25).

The letters of the alphabet on which the children were tested as part of the baseline assessment included; a, e, i, o, u, w, y, b, p, v, f, m, d, t, r, l, m, n, z, s, j, c, g, h, k. These letters were written on cut-out card board boxes so that the children could read them with ease. The letters were included in the test in order to assess whether the children could name, recognise letters and the sounds they represent. In addition, knowing the letter sounds of the alphabet is a fundamental aspect for children to learn how to read (Anatonacci and O'Callaghan, 2004, p. 48-49).

The words on which the children were examined in Runyankole were: ekisisi (calabash), amate (milk) omushana (sun), oburo (millet), ebyokurya (food), entabire (garden) and kanyamunyu (name of a bird). The words were written on flashcards so that children could easily read them. These words were included in the test in order to assess children's comprehension since vocabulary knowledge is one of the aspects of reading that helps children to read and understand texts efficiently and in more depth (Zhang, Shu and Tong, 2012).

The children were also assessed on sentence construction in the test. The sentences on which the children were assessed were:
  a) Omwana aine ekitabo (A baby has a book).
  b) Nyowe ninkunda okushoma (I like reading).
  c) Teera ompiira (Draw a picture of a ball).
  d) Niturya ebihimba n'obuhunga ah'ishomero (We eat beans and maize bread at school).

The sentences were specifically selected as reading materials of children in primary three tend to be mostly at sentence or short paragraph levels. Further, comprehension at sentence level forms the foundation of higher level reading comprehension in children (Zhang et al. 2012). The inclusion of letters of alphabet, words and sentences in the test was purposeful selected for the research team to identify specific reading comprehension challenges among children under this study.

During the process of the test, the letters, words and sentences were randomly arranged on the table. Then children were asked one by one to recognise and say the sound of each letter of the alphabet. This was followed by asking children to read aloud the words, and then the sentences of interest. The teachers and myself as researcher thereafter, asked oral questions about the words and sentences read by each child to check for their understanding. The number of sounds, words and sentences either

correctly or incorrectly read by each individual were then recorded in the researcher's reflective journal. The test was administered to forty children in a period of ninety minutes.

The outcomes of the test showed that children under this study experienced specific reading comprehension difficulties namely; letter knowledge difficulties, vocabulary development difficulty and comprehension difficulties. This was evidenced by the number of children who could not recognise and read the letters, read aloud the words and sentences. For instance twenty one children out of forty could not recognise and read the sounds. Twenty three out of forty children had challenges to blend sounds and form words. Twenty three out of forty also had challenges in reading and comprehending the sentences in the test. Only seventeen out of forty children could recognise sounds, blend sounds and form words and read sentences.

Identification of specific reading comprehension challenges of primary three bilingual children then directed myself together with the teachers (participants) to plan for action (planning cycle) of improving children' reading comprehension. In the case of this study the plan of action is the balanced reading instruction programme. I, the researcher together with the teachers decided, designed, adapted and implemented the strategies of the programme in the classroom instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children (action and observe cycle). After adapting the programme, the teachers explicitly taught reading comprehension using the planned strategies, materials and activities. I held regular reflective sessions with the teachers to reflect on their instruction and re-plan the strategies and assessment tests they would use to teach leading towards improving children's reading comprehension (reflect and re-plan cycle). The reflective sessions and lesson observations were videotaped. The implementation process of the programme lasted for twenty four weeks having one hour of direct instruction on a daily basis in the classroom

context. The content and the implementation process of the programme are discussed in detail in chapter four.

After the period of twenty three weeks of intensive direct instruction using the programme, the researcher together with the teachers executed evaluation (reflect and evaluation cycle) in relation to its effectiveness towards teachers' empowerment to teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children as well as improving children's reading comprehension. To effect the evaluation, I held a focus group interview session with the teachers in order to obtain their views, opinions and reflections on the balanced reading instruction programme in their instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. In collaboration with the teachers, we designed and administered a post-test assessment to the children. This test was given to the children as feedback to check whether teachers' instruction had addressed their various reading comprehension challenges. In addition, the test would be a basis on which to assess whether children made an improvement in their reading comprehension. Children's progress records were also analysed in order to ascertain some improvement made by children.

3.3.1.2 Challenges of participatory action research

Gills and Jackson (2002) contend that researchers who use PAR may experience challenges of participants' lack of commitment to the research project due to their personal agendas. Wadsworth (1998) further advances that the researchers may also experience uncertainty or lack of agreement amongst themselves on the overall purpose of the research project. Consequently, this may lead to asking incorrect questions or wrong direction of the research resulting into collection of irrelevant data.

As a PAR researcher, I addressed the above mentioned challenges by asking the participants to consent their participation through signing the consent

forms. The consent forms included the purpose of the research, its procedures and benefits, risks and discomforts, the informants' right to withdraw their voluntary participation at any stage without any negative action against them and to remain anonymous (Creswell, 2007, p, 141; Burns, 2000, p.18-19). In addition, being also a practitioner in education, I worked together with the participants as a team at every cycle of the research project since they were also teachers. Figure 8 illustrates the PAR process in relation to the balanced reading instruction as a programme for improving children's reading comprehension.
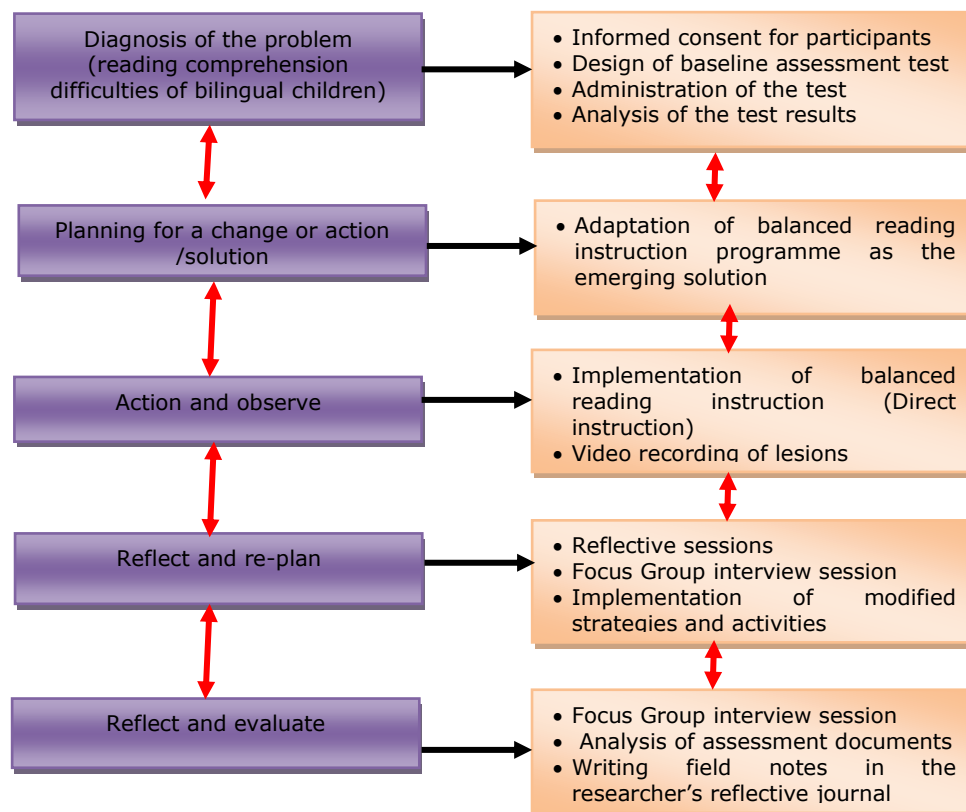
Figure 3.3 Participatory action research cycle process of balanced reading instruction programme (Adapted from Eliana, Mulenkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008, p.15)

3.4 Context of the study

Eliana, Mulenkiewicz and Bucknam (2008) assert that PAR researchers investigate the phenomena (balanced reading instruction programme) under the study in the context it occurs. In studying the phenomena in its natural setting, they collect evidence that makes them to understand the situation of the study and take action that results into change or improvement. This context can be a community or a school. In line with my study, the context is the school specifically Nyakayojo primary school. Nyakayojo primary school is located in Ruti Ward, a peri-urban area of Mbarara Municipality in western Uganda. Mbarara Municipality is predominantly occupied by one of the tribes of the Bantu ethnic group namely Banyankole whose native language is Runyankole (See figure 1.1 map of Uganda). This school was purposively selected for this study on the recommendation of the Principal Education officer of Mbarara Municipality. This particular school has a large number of children who were observed to experience reading comprehension difficulties in both their native (Runyankole) and English languages.

Nyakayojo primary school was specifically an interesting context for the study given that both the native language and English were taught to children of lower primary classes. As a result, the issues of reading comprehension difficulties in both languages would be easily represented in this setting. In addition, Nyakayojo primary school is a school where children come from families of low-economic status who engage in subsistence farming. It is therefore difficult for the parents in this school to adequately provide the convectional reading materials to their children, hence requiring creative programmes to address reading comprehension gaps.

Based on these contextual factors, Nyakayojo primary school was thus an appropriate context to help me understand in-depth bilingual children's reading comprehension challenges; teachers' instruction of reading comprehension; and the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction

programme in improving both teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension.
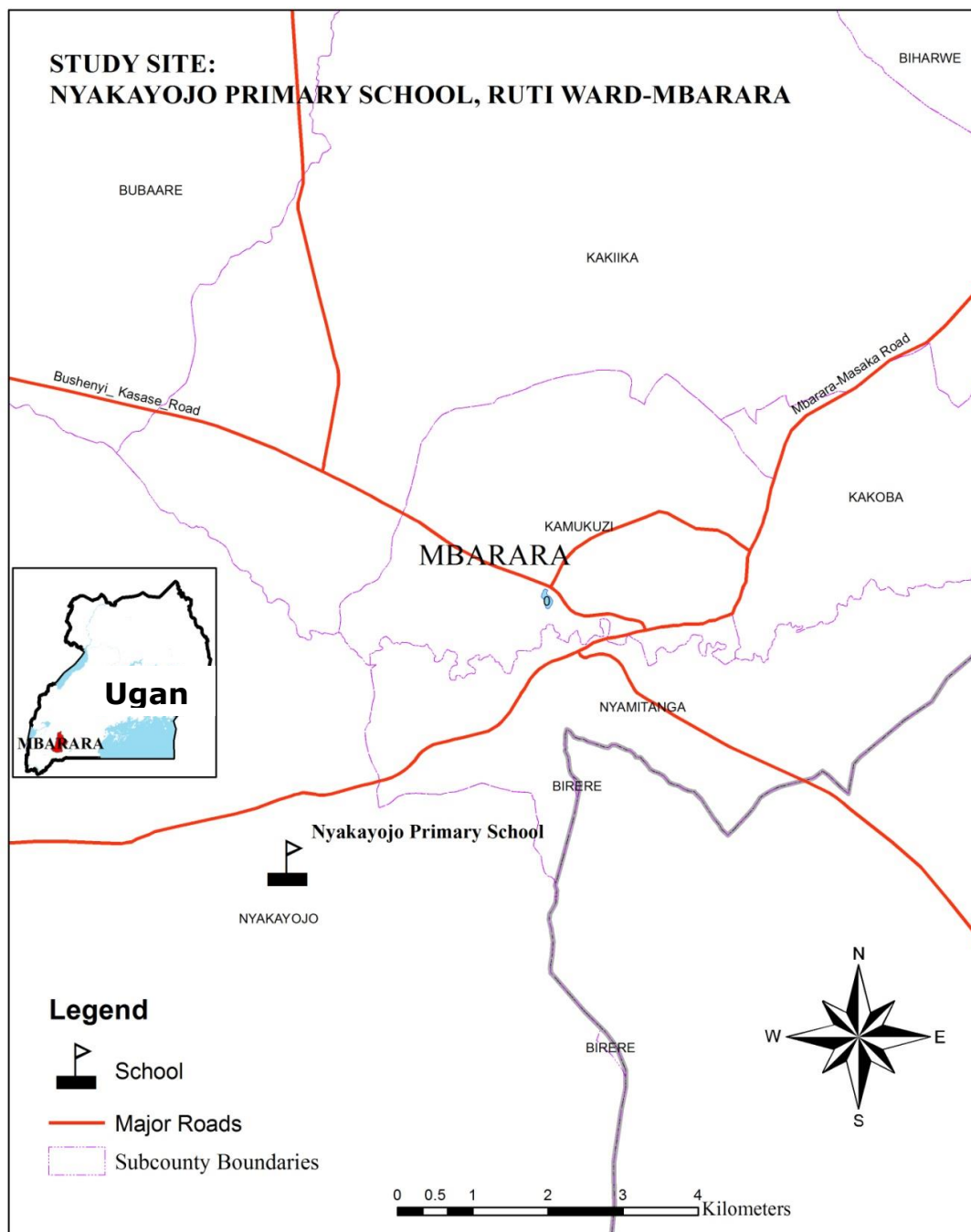
Figure 3.4 Location of Nyakayojo primary school as a study context

The participants of this study were also teachers of Nyakayojo primary school. Four primary three teachers were purposively selected on the recommendation of head teacher of Nyakayojo primary school. They were

specifically chosen because they were teaching reading to children of primary three. In addition, these teachers had had experience in teaching reading to children of lower primary classes. And thus they could understand and articulate the views and opinions on children's reading comprehension in both the native language and English. Primary three children were also selected in this study as indirect participants because they were children being taught by the four teachers. These children were also among the large number of children experiencing reading comprehension difficulties in both their native language and English in this school. As a researcher, I preferred to use primary three because children in this class are expected to read more advanced books while using a variety of strategies to comprehend the texts (Antonacci and O' Callaghan, 2004, p. 43).

Thus a population sample of four teachers and forty primary three children were used for this study. The sample size assisted the researcher to obtain in depth information-rich cases on the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme in improving teachers' instruction as well as children's reading comprehension (Patton, 2002, p. 230-231).

An overview of teacher participants in this study is indicated in Table 3.1. It lists their participant/pseudonyms, gender, qualifications, teaching experience and classes taught. I used pseudonyms to ensure anonymity of participants in this study.

Table 3.1 Biographical information of teacher participants

Participant/ pseudonym	Gender	Qualifications	Teaching experience	Classes taught
Teacher A	Female	Grade III Teacher's Certificate	24 years	Primary 1-3 (lower primary classes); Primary 4-6 (upper primary)
Teacher B	Female	Grade III Teachers' Certificate	6 years	Primary 1-3 (Lower primary classes)
Teacher C	Female	Grade III Teacher's certificate	6 years	Primary 1-3 (lower primary classes)
Teacher D	Female	Grade III Teacher's Certificate	10 years	Primary 1-3 (lower primary classes)

3.5 Data collection strategies

Pain et al. (2007) assert that PAR researchers ought to use data collection strategies that should be able to answer their research questions. For instance they could use group discussions, interviews, video recordings, photography, surveys and mapping. In line with my study, I employed focus group interviews, observation through field notes, visual methods, document analysis and researcher's reflective journal. These strategies assisted me to understand how the balanced reading instruction programme assisted teachers to provide support for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. The strategies also supported me to present a rich descriptive and detailed data on the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The programme is dealt with in detail in chapter four.

I conducted focus group interview sessions with teachers to gather information on the effectiveness of the programme in improving their instruction and children's reading comprehension. I observed lessons myself as taught by teachers while using the programme strategies to teach reading comprehension. After observing lessons, I the researcher and the teachers held regular reflective sessions to ascertain effective use of the strategies as well as the challenges encountered. The reflections were noted down in the researcher's reflective journal which was used as a data collection strategy. Document analysis was used to collect information on children's performance as a means of feedback for improvement made in their reading comprehension. The strategies are explained in detail in the subsequent sections.

3.5.1 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are structured as small group interviews focusing mainly on interviewing people who are similar in some way and collecting information about a particular topic under study. Emphasis is put on

respondents' insights, responses and opinions during the focus group interview sessions (Program Development and Evaluation, 2002). Krueger (2002) advances that the participants for focus group interviews should range from five to ten people per group carefully recruited and are of similar type who can bring out in-depth information about a specific topic.

Patton (2002, p.386) states that focus group interviewing aims at gathering gather high-quality information in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others on a specific research topic. He further advances that focus group interview sessions, if well conducted, have advantages that include; enhancing data quality through interactions among participants; quick assessment of a relatively consistent shared view or great diversity of views; cost effective data that is collected from a number of people in a specific time and enjoyment of sessions by participants.

In my study, I conducted three focus group interview sessions with primary three class teachers as participants of the study. The first session was conducted in the **planning** stage of the programme. I led the session while guiding the teachers to focus on identifying children's levels of reading comprehension difficulties, current strategies they use in teaching reading comprehension and their effects on children's reading comprehension. The outcomes of the focus group interview session became the basis on which the researcher and the teachers discussed, decided and adapted the balanced reading instruction programme.

The second focus group interview session was conducted in **action and observe** cycle with the focus on the implementation of the planned strategies, materials and activities in the programme and its impact on teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. The participants' views assisted me to get feedback on the progress of the programme in improving teacher's instruction and children's reading comprehension.

The third focus group interview session was conducted in the **evaluation** cycle purposely to gather information on the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme in empowering teachers with strategies for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. This is in agreement with Patton (2002, p. 388) who states that focus group interviews is one of the strategies researchers could use to obtain participants' perceptions to evaluate the outcomes and impact of research projects.

Prior to the focus group interview sessions, I prepared a focus group discussion guide from the reviewed literature that guided the sessions in identifying children's levels of reading comprehension difficulties, gaps in the strategies used by teachers to teach reading comprehension and adaptation and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. The discussion guide is provided in the addendum and comprised of questions such as;

How many children do you have in your class? Which languages do you teach to these children?

Is reading comprehension a challenge to your children? If so, what are some of the reading comprehension difficulties you observe in your children? What do you think could be the causes of these difficulties?

What strategies do you use while teaching reading to bilingual children? Do you think these strategies help these children to comprehend what they read? If no, why?

What activities for children do you think we could include in the intervention?

Conducting focus group interviews could be a challenge to researchers in that time for a particular individual to response can be restrained. Further, the number of questions asked could be greatly restricted in the group setting. It is also likely that the individuals whose view point is a minority

perspective may not be inclined to speak up and risk negative reactions (Patton, 2002, p. 387). Therefore to address these challenges in this study, I played the role of a moderator and mediated the discussions. I made sure that the discussions were not dominated by one or two participants. Each participant was given an opportunity to freely express her opinions on the question under discussion. I also used four questions per focus group discussion in order to provide time for the teachers to freely express freely express their views, opinions and ideas (Patton, 2002, p. 387; Krueger, 2002).

3.5.2 Observation

In addition to the data gathered from the focus group interviews, I observed in person a number of lessons in which the balanced reading instruction programme was explicitly applied in the instruction of reading comprehension to children in their native language (Runyankole) and English. The programme is dealt with comprehensively in chapter four. Kawulich (2005) defines observation as a systematic description of events, behaviours and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study. Patton (2002, p. 262) points out that observation as a data collection strategy assists researchers to; describe the study setting, the activities carried out and people; describe participants' perspectives on the study question. Opie (2004, p. 128) points out when using the observation strategy, the observer can either be a participant of non-participant. In the case of observer as participant, there is interaction with those being observed but does not take part in the activities in which they are engaged. Non-participant observer does not interact with those being observed.

In regard to this study, I was a participant observer as teachers taught different aspects of reading comprehension to children in Runyankole and English. While playing the role of observer as participant, I listened to interactions between teachers and children as they explicitly utilised the strategies and activities in the programme. I also listened to children's

responses to the teachers as they participated in oral and written activities (Wajryb, 1992, p. 28-29). In addition, I wrote my observations as field notes in the researcher's reflective journal. The lessons I observed were also videotaped. However, my activities during the observations (such as videotaping and taking notes as field notes) were made known to the class teachers and children (Kawulich, 2005).

The lesson observations assisted me to obtain first hand information on teachers' participation in their teaching and learning context. In addition, this information was used as excerpts at the interpretation stage of data analysis for this study (Patton, 2002, p. 262).

Opie (2004, p. 123) points out that observations can be influenced by the observer interpretation, time consuming and thus detrimental to researchers. In the case of this study, I videotaped the lessons observed in order to check against observer bias and misinterpretation.

3.5.3 Reflective journal

I used a reflective journal for recording field notes and lesson observations. The reflective journal assisted me to reflect on my actions and experiences as data during the analysis phase of this study. It provided the researcher with an opportunity to reflect on what was occurring in the study. Further, the journal enabled me as a researcher to keep record of decisions and issues that were particularly important in tracing the progress of the programme in teacher empowerment and children's reading comprehension (Popplewell and Hayman, 2012; Chou et al., 2012).

3.5.4 Document analysis

Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as a systematic process that is applied to review and evaluate different documents in written and electronic forms. This process involves skimming through the documents, reading, interpreting and analysing them to obtain information in relation to the

research questions. These documents include; agendas, attendance registers, minutes of meetings, manuals, background papers, books and brochures, dairies and journals, event programmes, scrapbooks and photo albums photographs, budget and financial records, annual reports, charts and routine records (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2002, p. 293).

Qualitative researchers can use data from documents to obtain background information on the research project that is to be undertaken. In addition, it can be utilised to corroborate data from observation and interviews in order to increase credibility of the findings (Owen, 2014; Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) further asserts that documents can be an effective strategy to collect data when events can no longer be observed or the respondents have forgotten the details of the events.

In the case of my study I used document analysis to triangulate data collected through observation, focus group interviews and researcher's reflective journal. In so doing I curbed down the potential biases that could have arose from using one data collection strategy and thus increased on the credibility of my study (Bowen, 2009). The documents I used for this study included teachers' daily lesson plan books and assessment records as well as children' activity books. I used teachers' lesson plan books to gather information on the use of the designed strategies and activities of the programme in the teaching of different aspects of reading comprehension to bilingual children. Children's activity books and assessment records were used to collect data on the nature of texts for comprehension; written questions set on the texts (provoking, understanding and interpretation) and children's feedback in responding to the questions in a written form. Data from these documents was used as excerpts during the data analysis phase of the study.

Nonetheless, document analysis can be a challenge to researchers in terms of time consuming when being collected, reviewed and analysed (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the researcher addressed this challenge by working in

collaboration with teachers and identified ways of keeping and maintaining children's assessment records and activity books throughout the period of study. These ways assisted the researcher and teacher participants to track children's progress and improvement in reading comprehension (Patton, 2002, p.293). For instance, children assessment records were filed in files and kept by teachers. Children's activity books were also kept by teachers in the teachers' cupboards and would be distributed to children at the time of the lessons and thereafter collected. These ways thus made it easier for the teachers to retrieve and collect the documents at the end of the study.

3.5.5 Visual methods

Visual methods as described by Phoenix (2010) refer to strategies researchers utilise to obtain visual data. These visual methods include photographs, videos, maps, diagrams, sketches, posters, websites signs and symbols (Phoenix, 2010). Phoenix further advances that photographic images and cameras are the most widely utilised methods in collecting visual data. Glaw, Inder, Kable and Hazelton (2017) categorise photographic method in two ways namely auto photography and photo elicitation. Auto photography refers to taking photographs of participants' setting which are then used as actual data. In the case of photo elicitation, photographs are used to generate verbal discussion so as to formulate data.

Glaw et al. (2017) assert using visual methods in data collection enhances the richness of data as they uncover information which is not captured in interviews or observation and thus increases the trustworthiness of the findings. Visual methods also allow participants to express their emotions and ideas in a non-verbal way. Phoenix (2010) adds that when visual methods are used alongside with other methods such as interviews and observation, they provide the researchers with useful and meaningful visual information.

Therefore, in the case of my study, I made use of visual methods in particular auto photography with an intention to capture teacher participants' expressions on their participation in the balanced reading instruction programme. I particularly took photographs of teachers in the classroom setting where they explicitly taught children while using the strategies of the programme. The photographs assisted me to obtain in-depth and subtle information about the effect of the programme on teachers' instruction. The information was used to supplement data collected through focus group interviews, document analysis and observation. The photographs were used as extracts in chapter four (implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme) and the data analysis phase.

Glaw et al. (2017) however point out that researchers may differ from the participants in their interpretation of photographs. In addition visual methods such as cameras require specialised skills to operate them. Phoenix (2010) asserts use of the visual methods will necessitate the researchers to obtain consent from the participants to include their images in the findings of the study. In this study I addressed these challenges firstly by seeking permission from the participants to use their photographic images. Secondly, I included an assistant moderator who had specialised skills in operating digital cameras and a video. The assistant moderator was in charge of video recording as well as a photographer (Krueger, 2002) during the focus group interview sessions.

Table 3.2 Summary of data collection strategies/instruments

Instrument	Purpose	Data recording tools	Advantages	Challenges
Focus group interviews	To obtain teachers' views on the on the effectiveness of the Balanced reading instruction programme towards the improvement of their instruction and children's reading comprehension.	Video recording the interview sessions; notes of the events.	Quality data is attained through interaction of participants. Data is collected from different participants in a specific period of time.	The discussion can be dominated by few individuals. Participants' views are likely to be suppressed by those who dominate the discussion. Asking too many questions may inhibit the participants to freely express their views.
Observation	To observe the planned strategies and activities in the programme being used in the teaching of reading comprehension. To observe children's responses and activities that enhance the use of comprehension strategies in understanding and interpreting different texts.	Writing lesson observations as field notes in the researcher's reflective journal.	Observation enables the researcher to obtain information which the participants did not talk about in the interviews. Observation assists the researcher to obtain information about the participants while in their natural setting.	The people being observed are likely to change their behaviour. The observations may be manipulated by the observer. Observation can be time consuming.
Document analysis	To obtain information on the effectiveness of the programme in improving children's reading comprehension.	Taking notes of the findings for the documents: lesson plan books, assessment records and children's activity books.	Documents provide additional reliable information.	The analysis of documents is time consuming when being collected, reviewed and analysed.
Visual methods: Photographs	To obtain information on teachers' explicit instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children in a classroom setting.	Using cameras and videos to take photographs as well as video recording scenes for teachers' instruction of reading comprehension while using the strategies and activities of the programme in	Visual methods provide additional subtle information.	Data is likely to be interpreted differently as compared to participants' expressions. Video methods require specialised skills to operate the equipment.

Instrument	Purpose	Data recording tools	Advantages	Challenges
		the classroom setting.		
Reflective journal	To obtain information on researcher's reflections and experiences on the study.	Taking field notes during observation, focus group interview and reflective sessions.	Reflective journal provide evidence of researcher's critical reflections on all the occurrences that take place throughout the study.	Data from the reflective journal can only be made visible to others by the researcher.

3.6 Data analysis strategies

Creswell (2007, p. 148) describes data analysis in qualitative research such as participatory action research, as a process that consists of preparing, organizing, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes and representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion. In analysing the data of this study the researcher utilised content analysis technique and a general inductive approach to establish a comprehensive set of themes or patterns.

Content analysis is described as a technique for examining content or information in written or symbolic material, such as pictures, movies and song lyrics. Content analysis involves establishing a system of recording specific aspects in the content of large amounts of recorded information (transcripts of interviews, discourses, protocols of observation, video tapes and documents) that is later written in descriptive form (Neuman, 2003, p. 36; Mayring, 2000). Content analysis is concerned with; fitting the material into a model of communication such as aspects of the communicator, situation of text production, social cultural background and the text itself; analysing the material step by step while following the rules of procedures and formulating content analytical units; formulating categories in relation to the research questions and maintaining objectivity in analysing data as checks for reliability and validity (Mayring, 2000).

In this study I utilised content analysis technique to analyse data from videotaped lesson observations, documents and focus group interviews sessions. While analysing the data, I formulated content analytical units and categorised them into similar patterns or themes in relation to the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme towards improving teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension. This is in consistent with Patton (2002, p. 453) who states that when such texts are analysed core meanings are identified and referred to as themes or patterns.

Inductive data analysis was another strategy the researcher employed while analysing data of the study. Inductive analysis is described as a strategy where patterns, categories and themes are built from bottom up by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. It involves identifying core meanings evident in the text in relation to the research questions, categorising the data into themes, working back and forth between the themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established and making a description of the most important themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 37-38; Thomas, 2006).

The inductive analysis strategy as described by Creswell (2007) assisted the researcher to; condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; establish clear links between the research questions and summary findings derived from the raw data and to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences that are evident in the text data.

Thus, the analysis of data for this study was guided by the procedures stipulated in both the content analysis and inductive analysis strategies. The researcher read through the transcripts and observation notes, organised and wrote the data using codes while categorising similar patterns or themes that occurred in the interactions, interpreted the findings and presented them in a descriptive form evidenced by excerpts from the raw data. This is in consistent with Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis strategy that

involves; writing margin notes in field notes, writing reflective messages in notes, drafting a summary sheet, making descriptions, writing codes, noting patterns and themes, counting frequency of codes, factoring, noting relations among variables and building a chain of evidence, making contrasts and comparisons in the data (Creswell, 2007, p. 149).

3.7 Rigour and trustworthiness

Krefting (1991) describes rigour and trustworthiness as truth obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. Trustworthiness of phenomena that is under study is addressed through criteria that comprises of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility is described as the ability to capture the intent of the study through the findings drawn the participants' original data. This can be achieved through prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation in the field, use of peer debriefing, time sampling, reflexivity, triangulation member checking and structural coherence (Anney, 2014; Morrow, 2005).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of the qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. Transferability can be facilitated when the researcher provides a detailed thick description that involves explaining all the research processes from data collection, context of the study to the production of the final report. This thick description guides qualitative researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings (Anney, 2014; Morrow, 2005). Transferability could also be enhanced through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting particular settings, persons or activities mainly to provide information that yields insights and in-depth understanding of a particular research question (Maxwell, 2005, p. 89; Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Dependability involves participants evaluating the findings, the interpretations and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by data received from the informants of the study. This can be achieved through carefully tracking the research design, provision of a detailed chronology of research activities and processes, influences on data collection and analysis, emerging themes, categories or models and analytic memos (Anney, 2014; Morrow, 2005).

Conformability refers to the degree to which findings are not influenced by bias, motivations and perspectives (Krefting, 1991). It is based on the perspective that the data and interpretations of the findings are not influenced by the researcher's imaginations but purely derived from the data. This can be achieved through the use of researcher's reflective journal that includes all events that happened in the field and researcher's personal reflections in relation to the study (Anney, 2014; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

To maintain rigour and trustworthiness in this study, I used methodological triangulation. Patton (2002, p. 555-556) states that methodological triangulation is the use of multiple methods in data collection. The use of multiple data collection methods verifies the consistency of the findings of the study as well, thus overcoming scepticism and single-method perspective interpretations. Focus group interviews, observations, document analysis and visual methods were employed to collect data in this study. The researcher used these methods in order to reduce the risk of drawing conclusions that reflect systematic biases and limitations of a particular method.

I maintained objectivity as best as possible by recording data in narrative or thick description form. The participants were purposively selected for study. They were given opportunities to be frank and free to speak their minds on the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme towards the improvement of teachers' instruction and reading comprehension of bilingual

children. This was done through focus group interview sessions. I used a reflective journal to record all events that occurred in the field, reflections of the research team on the programme and my personal reflections on the study. The use of observation, focus group interviews and documents at different times and sessions increased the trustworthiness of the data collection during the study.

3.8 Ethical considerations in this PAR study

Sieber (1993, p. 14) defines ethics as the application of moral principles to prevent harm or wrong to others, to promote the good, to be respectful and fair (Opie, 2004, p. 25). To obtain high-quality information from the focus group interviews, observations and documents, the researcher recognised ethical obligations to the class teachers of primary three, who were the main informants of this study. Creswell (2007, p. 141) points out that ethical obligations require anonymity and confidentiality of informants, thereby representing a composite picture rather than individuals, and that the informants should be informed of their participatory roles and actions in the study. Burns (2000, p. 18-19) states that the informed consent form, which covers issues such as the purpose of the research, its procedures and benefits, risks and discomforts, the informants' right to withdraw their voluntary participation at any stage without any negative action against them and to remain anonymous, should be prepared prior to the study.

In line with this study, I prepared well in advance informed consent forms for the class teachers of primary three as the main informants, principal education officer of Mbarara Municipality, and the head teacher of Nyakayojo primary school. The informed consent forms were approved by the Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria before they were given to the respective participants.

The principal education officer of Mbarara Municipality and the head teacher of Nyakayojo primary school signed the informed consent forms to allow the

researcher gain access to the informants (teachers and children) and the school setting. Teachers were asked to complete and sign informed consent forms to agree to participate in the study. The consent forms did not have specified particular time of discontinuation and thus the participants were free to discontinue from the study any time. The teachers gave consent to be photographed which I have used in chapter four. The children were indirect participants in this study and thus did not sign assent forms.

3.9 Role of the researcher in this PAR study

As an experienced primary school teacher as well as a teacher educator, I tried as much as possible to be unbiased in this context of the study. I played the role of an ally, moderator and a researcher in this PAR study. In the case of an ally, I worked in collaboration with the teachers to design, adapt and implement the balanced reading instruction programme and established its effectiveness in improving teachers' instruction of reading comprehension as well as reading comprehension of bilingual children in the classroom context. As a moderator, I directed the focus group interview discussions towards the purpose of the study being guided by the questions in the discussion guide.

Since the study was PAR in nature, I ensured that I followed the set research ethics with regard to the participants. In collaboration with the teacher participants, we discussed and decided to use pseudonyms and numbers while recording data as a means of maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. In the case of teachers we agreed that they would be known by pseudonyms (A, B, C or D) while the selected school and children were known by numbers (1, 2, 3…). I maintained objectivity in recording data by using field notes, video cameras, digital cameras and an assistant moderator in order to reduce threats to validity such as bias and inaccuracy of data. The assistant moderator videotaped the discussions, photographed teachers as they engaged children in different activities, I also recorded the data in a narrative or descriptive form and

used excerpts as evidence while analysing and interpreting the data. This is in consistent with Bergold (2012) who states that the researcher's role in PAR is to be an ally, an advisor or partner as well as a researcher in the study being undertaken. Nevertheless, the roles are subject to change depending on the length and time frame of PAR projects. As a researcher, I adhered to all the actions of the research process and managed it throughout the research project.

3.10 Summary

This chapter provided a description of the research paradigm and research methodology used in the adaptation and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme for improving teachers' instruction as well as reading comprehension of bilingual children. The chapter spelt out the context in which the study was carried out. It explained the strategies the researcher used in collecting, analysing and interpreting the data for this study. The next chapter presents the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme.

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three explored the research paradigm and participatory action research design of this study in regard to the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. This chapter firstly describes the rationale for the design of the balanced reading instruction programme. Secondly, it describes the content and activities that were carried out at different phases of the programme. Finally, the implementation challenges and recommendations the researcher shared with the teacher participants are discussed.

4.2 Rationale for the balanced reading instruction programme

Children should be engaged in reading comprehension tasks in the early grades as a basis for them to succeed in reading and academic studies in their later years of education. Studies however show that children in these grades (primary one to three) experience reading comprehension challenges that are detrimental to their mastery of literacy (Nation, 2004; Cain and Oakhill, 2004; Snow, Burns and Griffins, 1998, p. 2). In this study, reading comprehension challenges were particularly identified among primary three bilingual children who were taught in both their native language (Runyankole) and English at school. Therefore, the design and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme was based on the findings of NAPE (2010; 2011) reports as described in chapter 1 (section 1.2) and my experience as a teacher and a researcher in teacher education.

The intent of the balanced reading instruction programme was twofold. Firstly, the programme aimed at empowering teachers through PAR with

strategies they could use to support children to improve their reading comprehension. Secondly, the programme was to address the identified challenges so that an improvement could be attained in children's reading comprehension. The content of the programme was derived from the components and strategies that were discussed during the PAR process and are indicated in the following sessions.

4.3 Phases of the balanced reading instruction programme

The implementation of the programme was conducted in four phases in relation to cyclic process of the participatory action research for this study. During the first phase, the researcher together with the teacher participants identified reading comprehension challenges as a problem among primary three bilingual children. The second phase dealt with the conceptualisation of the programme. The conceptualisation process included discussion of the components and activities of the programme that could be adapted as an action to be utilised to rectify the challenges. The third phase focused on teachers' explicit instruction of reading comprehension to children in the classroom context. In phase four, the researcher in partnership with the teachers evaluated the programme in regard to its effectiveness towards improving teachers' instruction and children's reading comprehension. Data collection was also conducted at every phase of the implementation of the programme. The activities and data collection strategies for the four phases are discussed in the subsequent sections. Figure 10 provides an overview of the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme.

Phase 1: Identification of the problem: Reading comprehension challenges of bilingual children

Activities →

- Exploratory visit to the school
- Informed consent with participants
- Design and administration of baseline assessment test
- Analysis of the results
- Identification of different reading comprehension challenges of bilingual children
- Video recording of sessions; teacher participants; Writing of field notes by the researcher in the reflective journal.

Phase 2: Planning for change and action: Designing the balanced reading instruction programme

Activities →

- Formulation of the programme (Literature)
- Discussion of the programme by the researcher together with the teacher participants
- Adaptation of balanced reading instruction programme
- Considering reading comprehension challenges of bilingual children.

Phase 3: Action and observe: Explicit instruction using the adapted strategies and activities in the programme

Activities →

- Interactive sessions with teachers.
- Direct instruction using the strategies of the programme by teachers
- Observing lessons in classrooms
- Focus group interview sessions
- Ongoing assessment tests
- Reflective sessions on the adapted programme
- Field notes and reflections written by researcher in her reflective journal
- Video recording of lessons and sessions.

Phase 4: Evaluation: Effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme

Activities →

- Focus group interview session
- Design and administration of post assessment tests
- Analysis of children's progress records
- Field notes and reflections written by researcher in her reflective journal
- Video recording of sessions.

Figure 4.1 Overview of the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme

4.3.1 Phase 1: Identification of the problem: reading comprehension challenge of bilingual children (Week 1)

The aim of this phase was to establish specific reading comprehension challenges experienced by bilingual children of this study. The challenges directed the researcher and teacher participants to design a specific intervention programme to address them. In this phase, I made exploratory visits to the school as my study context. During these visits I sought permission from the head teacher to gain access to the school setting, and participants. Primary participants were teachers while their children were indirect participants. The head teacher signed the consent form as evidence to allow me conduct the study in her school. The teachers also signed the consent forms in agreement to participate in the study (Creswell, 2007, p.141).

Thereafter, I conducted a focus group interview session with the teachers in a classroom at the school. I formulated four questions in line with Krueger's (2002) assertion that questions guiding the focus group interviews ought to be not more than four in order to provide sufficient time for participants' interaction. The questions directed our conversation towards the identification of specific comprehension challenges among their bilingual children. In this session, teachers' responses clearly brought out that primary three bilingual children experienced reading comprehension challenges such as letter-sound recognition and reading; vocabulary development and inability to comprehend what was read. During the discussion session, participants' responses also indicated that teachers in this study experienced instruction gaps in particular in teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children. The assistant moderator videotaped the session. In addition, I made notes on the discussions in my reflective journal.

After conducting the focus group interview session with the teachers, I designed the baseline assessment test in collaboration with the teachers as

explained in detail in (Section 3.2). The aim of the test was to assess specific reading comprehension challenges among the children. The outcomes of the test also showed that children had challenges in sound recognition and blending sounds into words; reading words and sentences. The test results clearly indicated the number of children who had specific reading comprehension difficulties. Twenty one out of forty children experienced difficulties in letter-sound recognition (52.5%); twenty three out of forty (57.5%) experienced challenges in letter-sound recognition, blending of sounds to form words and reading with comprehension of sentences. Seventeen out of forty (42.5%) were able to recognise letter sounds, blended sounds to form words and read the sentences. The outcomes of the assessment are indicated in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Outcomes of the baseline assessment test

Participant/ pseudonym	Letter-sound recognition of the Alphabet of Runyankole	Reading of words in Runyankole	Reading sentences of sentences in Runyankole
Child 1	X	X	X
Child 2	X	X	X
Child 3	X	X	X
Child 4	X	X	X
Child 5	X	/	X
Child 6	X	X	X
Child 7	/	/	/
Child 8	X	X	X
Child 9	X	X	X
Child 10	X	X	X
Child 11	/	/	/
Child 12	X	X	X
Child 13	/	/	/
Child 14	X	X	X
Child 15	/	/	/
Child 16	/	/	/
Child 17	X	X	X
Child 18	/	/	/
Child 19	X	X	X
Child 20	X	X	X
Child 21	X	X	X
Child 22	X	X	X
Child 23	X	X	X
Child 24	X	X	X
Child 25	/	/	/
Child 26	/	/	/
Child 27	/	/	/
Child 28	/	/	/

Participant/ pseudonym	Letter-sound recognition of the Alphabet of Runyankole	Reading of words in Runyankole	Reading sentences of sentences in Runyankole
Child 29	/	/	/
Child 30	/	/	/
Child 31	/	/	/
Child 32	/	/	/
Child 33	X	X	X
Child 34	X	X	X
Child 35	X	X	X
Child 36	/	X	X
Child 37	/	X	X
Child 38	/	/	/
Child 39	/	/	/
Child 40	X	X	/
Total (%)	21/40 (52.5%)	23/40 (57.5%)	17/40 (42.5%)

The cross (x) in the table indicates the child could not recognise and read aloud the sounds, words and sentences. The slash (/) indicates that the child was able to recognise and read the sounds, words and sentences.

4.3.2 Phase 2: Planning for change and action: Designing the balanced reading instruction programme (Week 2)

Phase two of the programme aimed at identifying an intervention as a remedy that could address children's reading comprehension challenges as identified in phase one. As a researcher in this study, I explained to the teacher participants that I explored the literature and found that the design of a balanced reading instruction programme would be a means through which we could solve the challenges of reading comprehension among our children. The balanced reading instruction programme was designed through the participation of the researcher and teacher participants to include; explicit instruction of phonological awareness, alphabet principle, vocabulary development and comprehension (Zygouris-Coe; Chou et al., 2012; Kelly, 1997). The programme also incorporated strategies such as phonics instruction, guided practice, reading aloud, extensive reading practice, small group instruction, literacy engagement and ongoing assessment (Chou et al., 2012; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

In collaboration with the teacher participants, we discussed each of the components and strategies in detail. We then decided to adapt all the components as content to be explicitly taught to children since they were areas in which children were also experiencing challenges. We also adapted strategies namely; phonics instruction, reading aloud; guided reading practice; teacher's modelling/scaffolding; small group instruction; literacy engagement and ongoing assessment. During this phase we decided that the teachers first participate in interactive professional development sessions on the components and strategies before their instruction. The sessions were conducted in their own classrooms. The discussions of the planning phase were video recorded by the assistant moderator. In addition, I wrote notes in my reflective journal.

Figure 4.2 Planning session

4.3.3 Phase 3: Action and Observe: Explicit instruction using the adapted strategies and activities in the programme (21 weeks)

The purpose of phase three was to utilise the content and strategies of the balanced reading instruction programme in the instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children in the classroom context. This phase started with teachers' professional development sessions on components and strategies of the programme. Mc Niff (2010) states that through action

research professional development programmes build on a model of learning whereby teachers are challenged and assisted to find new ways of doing things through practice. In line with this study, we critically examined the strategies they used in teaching reading comprehension during the focus group discussion session. Teacher's responses indicated that they identified gaps in their instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. For instance they used Runyankole (native language) to explain the meaning of English words for children to understand. Teachers further acknowledged that their teaching of reading comprehension encouraged rote learning rather than comprehension (See Addendum, DVD 2, Interactive Sessions). Torgesen (2005) points out that a reading instruction programme such as the balanced reading instruction requires teachers who are well-trained and experienced in order to deliver effective interventions. Therefore it is on this basis that I conducted interactive professional development sessions on the adapted strategies and activities so that teachers could identify their instruction gaps and obtain better strategies of teaching reading comprehension.

4.3.3.1 Interactive professional development sessions (Week 3)

The interactive professional development sessions were conducted in accordance to the key components of the balanced reading instruction programme namely; phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension. Emphasis was put on these components since the challenges of children's reading comprehension posited on them. During the sessions, I worked in collaboration with the teacher participants to identify and design reading materials and activities that were used to support children to improve their reading comprehension. The sessions, reading materials and activities were conducted in Runyankole since it was the teachers' native language and medium of instruction in lower primary classes. In addition, the outcomes of the baseline assessment test indicated that the majority of children in this study setting experienced

reading comprehension challenges in particular Runyankole as their first language. Thus, teachers' participation in these sessions equipped them with strategies to teach reading comprehension to their bilingual children. In the subsequent sections I deal with the different sessions.

Session one: Alphabet knowledge. In this session teachers were asked to recognise the sounds that are associated with a letter or groups of letters of the alphabet for Runyankole as indicated below.
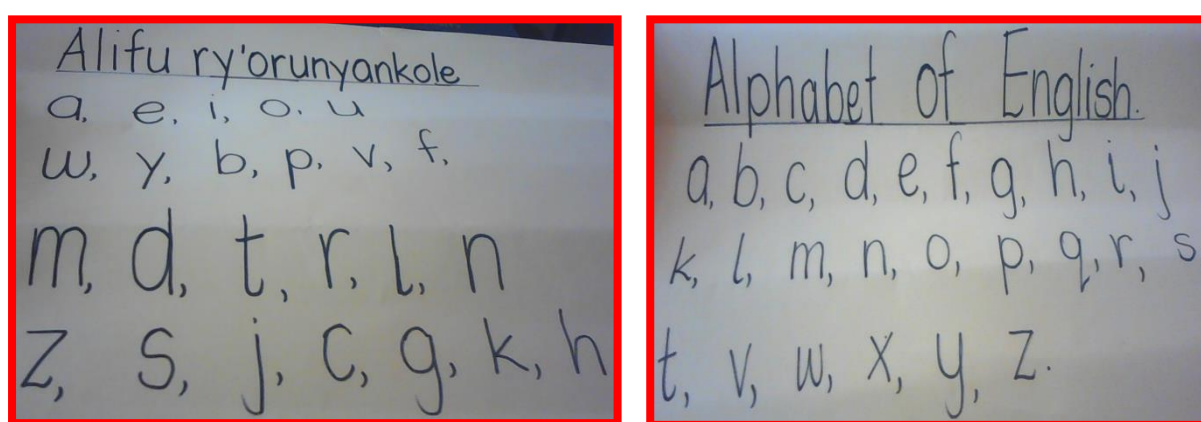
Figure 4.3 Representation of the alphabet in Runyankole and English

Using the phonics instruction, I guided the teachers to correctly read aloud the sounds associated with each letter of the above alphabet. I used phonics instruction as it involves explicit teaching of individual letter-sound correspondences, their sequences (including spelling patterns) and the pronunciation of corresponding sounds (Mesmer and Griffith, 2005; Connelly, Johnston and Thompson, 2001; Barrat-Pugh and Rohl, 2000, p 72-73). After recognising the sounds, we identified similar sounds from their surroundings that would aid them to teach these sounds to children. For example a dog panting for 'hh'; Bowing the fire for 'ff'; a dog is barking for 'bb'. These sounds assisted teachers to master the sounds associated to each letter of the Runyankole alphabet. Thereafter, teachers did individual and group practice of reading aloud the sounds. After the practice, each teacher demonstrated reading aloud the sounds of the alphabet to all the

other teacher participants. During this session, we also looked at the teaching of sounds of the alphabet of English using the phonics instruction. Thus teachers identified the differences and similarities between the sounds of the letters of the alphabet of Runyankole and English. For instance English has sounds of 'q' and 'x' while Runyankole does not have these sounds.

Session two: Phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is described as a general appreciation of the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning. It involves the identification and manipulation of sound structures in the spoken words of a particular language such as syllables and rhyme (Ventor, in Joubert et al., 2013, p. 243). With regard to Runyankole as the one of the languages for this study, it comprises spoken words that have multi-syllables in its sound structures. Thus it was paramount for teachers in this setting to be trained on the development of words from these multi-syllable sound structures. We blended the consonants and vowels of the Runyankole alphabet to form syllables. For instance b+a=ba; b+e=be; b+i=bi; b+o=bo; b+u=bu. The two-letter syllables were developed for the entire alphabet as shown in figure 4.4. The teachers practiced reading them aloud. We then developed three-letter syllables using the two-letter syllables as indicated in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.4 Representation of two letter syllables

Figure 4.5 Representation of three letter syllables

Session three: Vocabulary knowledge. In this session we dealt with vocabulary development and understanding since good vocabulary is one of the prerequisites of reading comprehension (Oakhill and Cain, 2004). I worked with the teachers to form words using the syllables and vowels. For instance a+ma+te=amate (milk); e+ga+ri=egari (bicycle); o+mu+ka+zi= omukazi (woman); e+nko+nko=enkonko (hen); e+mpa+re=empare (a pair of shorts).

Figure 4.6 Teachers forming words from syllables

The teachers wrote syllables on strips of cardboard boxes, cut them and used them to formulate words. This was done in order to investigate

resources that could be used with minimum costs in developing children's reading materials. The teachers then practiced forming words and developed a lot of vocabulary. In addition to vocabulary development, teachers also identified pictures that could be used to enhance comprehension of words.

After formulating the words we then constructed sentences using the vocabulary such as Egi n'embuzi. (This is a goat.); Kato aine empare (Kato has a pair of shorts); Omwana narya ebyokurya (A baby is eating food).

Figure 4.7 Representation of vocabulary developed by teachers

Session four: Comprehension. In this session teachers were guided on teaching reading comprehension using different texts that comprised of the words and sentences developed in the previous sessions. The teachers also gave their understanding and shared their ideas about the texts. We explored the school library and found only few relevant readers that could be

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used to teach comprehension to children. I extracted a text from one of the books which we then decided to use as a sample in this session. Then we formulated questions on the text that reinforced predictions and the use of background knowledge in comprehending the text (Mkhwanazi, 2012). We also looked at Bloom's taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing to guide us in the formulation of questions on the text in accordance to their levels of complexity. The questions would also guide the teachers to enhance content understanding of the text as well as creative thinking among children (Joubert et al., 2013, p. 218-223).

Nyina Kengoro ari omuka.
Akora emirimu mingi omuka.
Aboneza omuka kandi ateeka
ebyokurya na kyai.
Ayozya emyenda ya Rutaro
n'eya Kengoro.
Kandi aine n'akaana akato.
Akonsya kandi akanaabisa.
Nyina akora emirimo mingi.

Figure 4.8 The comprehension text

We formulated the following questions on this text as an exercise:

Table 4. 2 Questions to enhance reading comprehension

	Questions in Runyankole	English version	Levels of questions
1.	Norebaki omukishushani?	What do you see in the picture?	Factual; cognitive level 1
2.	Nooha akukora emirimu mingi?	Who does a lot of work in this story?	Factual; cognitive level 1
3	Notekateka omukazi nakora ki?	What do you think the woman is doing?	Conceptual; Cognitive level 2 (comprehension)
4	Ahabwaki Nyina Kengoro nanabisa akanake?	Why is the mother of Kengoro bathing her baby?	Conceptual; Cognitive level 2 (comprehension)
5.	Omuka ya Kengoro harimu abantu bahangahi?	How many people are found in Kengoro's home?	Conceptual; cognitive level 2 (interpretation)
6	Washanga nyina Kengoro narya haza yakuha ebyokurya nokoraki?	If you find the mother of Kengoro and she gives you some food, what will you do?	Create; cognitive level 3 (prediction)

This was done to support teachers to teach reading comprehension by using texts in an interactive approach while using carefully graded questions and children's background knowledge to enhance understanding (Cummins, 2000, p. 274; Joubert et al., 2013, p. 222-223).

They were also guided on the use of other interactive strategies for enhancing reading comprehension. These were modelling/scaffolding reading; guided individual reading practice; reading aloud, and small group instruction (Chou et al., 2012; Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Figure 4.9 Self-written comprehension text

Session five: Reading materials and children's activities. In this session, I worked with teachers to design self-written texts and wrote them in their lesson planning books ready to be used in their instruction of reading comprehension. We investigated the possibility of making cut-out letter cards and syllables from strips of card board boxes obtained from the shops in their school surroundings as scrap materials. We made these materials because the school did not have sufficient resources to use. In addition, the parents of the children in this study were from low socio-economic status and could not adequately provide reading materials to their children at home.

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Figure 4.10 Teacher-made letter cards

During this session, we also identified activities that teachers could use to develop phonological awareness in children as indicated in the table below.

Table 4.2: Activities to develop phonological awareness among children

Activity	Teacher's facilitation	Children's interaction
Reading aloud letter sounds	Teacher models the sound for example 'k' while showing the letter card	Children read the sound 'K' after the teacher
Sorting and matching similar letter sound	Teacher displays assorted letter cards on the mat and guides them to identify similar sounds for example k-k; b-b	Using the assorted letter cards children sort and match similar letter sounds
Using sounds of objects, animals and people in their surroundings	Teacher says blow the fire:'ffff' Bark like a dog 'bbb'	Children say the sounds 'bbb; 'ffff'
Games and songs that have letters	Teacher sings the song while placing emphasis on the sounds as children listen attentively. For example Iwe mwanawe Kakyerere eeee Kakyerere eeeee Kakyerere. Waba ogirehi? Kakyerere eee; (Where had you gone Kakyerere?) Teacher asks children to say the sound that is repeated in the song	Children sing the song with the teacher first and then alone Children say the sound eee
Blending sounds to form syllables	Teacher demonstrates blending of sounds on chalkboard for example m+a=ma; m+e=me; m+i=mo; m+u=mu. Then models the reading of the syllable	Children individually blend sounds to form syllables using cut-out letter cards k+a=ka; k+e=ke; k+i=ki; k+o=ko; k+u=ku
Blending of syllables to form words	Teacher demonstrates the blending of syallabes to form words on the chalkboard. a+ba+a+na=abaana; a+ma+te=amate	Children form words using letter cards a+ka+ti=akati; ka+to=kato; a+ka+me=akame

4.3.3.2 Direct instruction of reading comprehension

After the professional development sessions, we acknowledged that intensive instruction should be conducted in Runyankole so that children obtain a level of mastery of reading comprehension before being introduced to English. Thus, we collaboratively decided to devote fifteen weeks to the instruction of reading comprehension in Runyankole, and six weeks to English. This was done to investigate whether children's level of mastery of reading comprehension in Runyankole while on the programme could support them improve reading comprehension in English as well (Cummins, 2005).

In the period of fifteen weeks, explicit instruction was conducted in accordance to the components of balanced reading instruction programme. Chou et al. (2012) point out that when using balanced reading instruction programme, teachers should conduct explicit instruction in phonological awareness, alphabet principle, vocabulary and reading comprehension. This instruction gives children opportunities to practice reading and thus improves their reading comprehension. In line with Chou et al. (2012), we decided to systematically carry out instruction from the alphabet principle to comprehension as discussed in the next sections.

4.3.3.2.1 Instruction of the alphabet of Runyankole (Week 4 to Week 10)

Prior to the instruction of the alphabet, in collaboration with teacher participants we grouped children in accordance to their reading comprehension difficulties as identified from the outcomes of the baseline assessment tests. Four groups were formed namely; Group A (10 children); Group B (12 children); Group C (10 children); Group D (08 children). The groups were freely distributed among the four teachers. Children were divided in small groups so that teachers could provide intensive support of one-to-one tutoring of one hour on a daily basis (Chou et al., 2012;

Torgesen 2005). In addition, small groups enabled teachers to become familiar with children's strengths and needs as well as giving them time for practice (Pukulski, 1997). Nonetheless, the groups were flexible in that children would be moved to another group in accordance to their level of progress.

Thereafter teachers explicitly taught letter sounds of the alphabet of Runyankole, blending of the sounds to form multi-syllables and vocabulary for all the four groups. They started with teaching the sounds that corresponded with the letters of the alphabet in the fourth week of the programme. The teachers read aloud the sounds as the children listened. The children read aloud after the teacher and then by themselves. The teachers also used sounds from their surroundings to reinforce the understanding of the sounds. This is in agreement with what Bilash (2009) refers to as context-embedded language tasks in which learners are exposed to contextual clues to support their understanding.

Figure 4.11 Teacher teaching sound recognition and blending

The teachers also guided the children to individually sort out similar sounds from the assorted cut-out letter cuts as an activity for them to recognise the sounds with the letter names. After this activity children would say out the sounds and write them in the activity books.

Figure 4.12 Recognition of sounds with letter names

In the fifth week of programme the teachers continued with the instruction of the alphabet whereby they guided children to blend the sounds and form two letter-syllables. At this stage the teachers guided them to formulate words using vowels and two-letter syllables. They involved children in formulating the two-letter syllables for all the letters of the alphabet. In this case they guided children to read the syllable aloud, sort similar syllables from assorted letter cards. After reading aloud the sounds the children would then write them in their activity books. Thereafter the teachers led the children to formulate words using vowels and two-letter syllables. The teacher reinforced comprehension of words in Runyankole by using pictures as indicated in figure 4.14

Figure 4.13 Teacher guiding children to formulate words
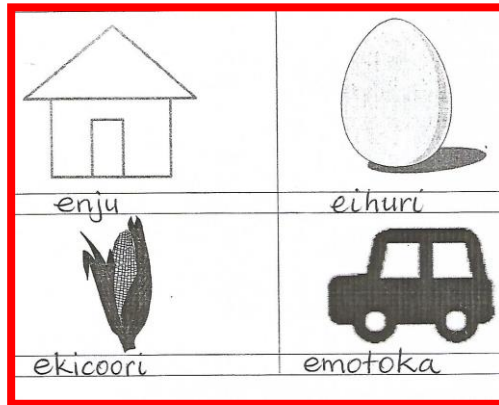
Figure 4.14 Use of pictures to reinforce comprehension

The teachers engaged children in the practice of vocabulary development and comprehension while using vowels and two letter syllables in the sixth and seventh week of the programme.
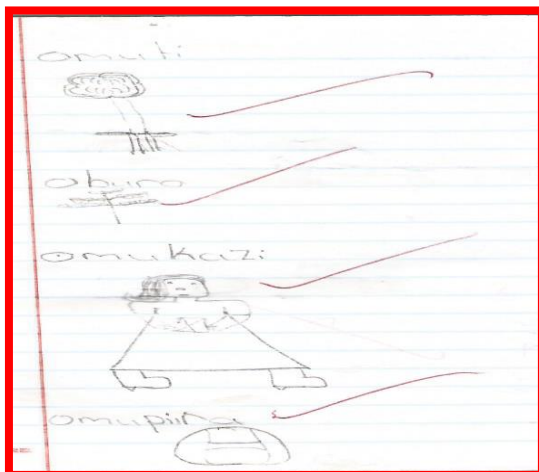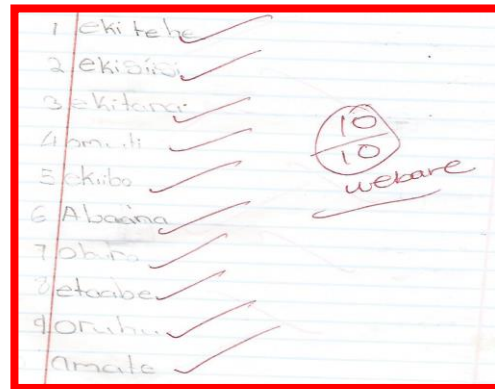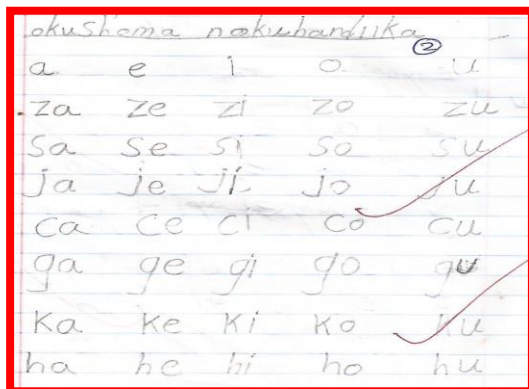
Formation of words
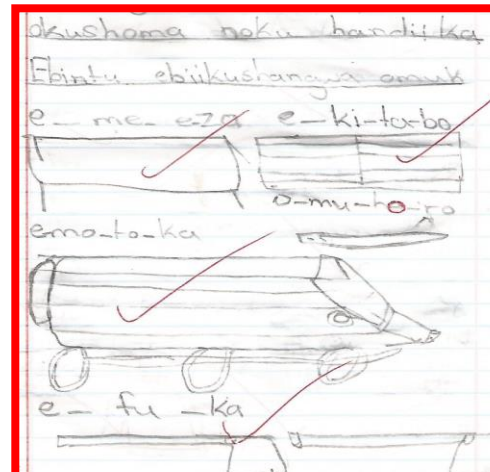
Use of picture comprehension

Figure 4.15 Children's activities on vocabulary development and comprehension

As an observer participant I listened to teachers as they taught the sounds of alphabet to children. The teachers modelled sounds to children and engaged them in different activities as discussed in our interactive sessions. In addition I noted down the sounds well modelled and those that needed more reinforcement in in my reflective journal. The lessons were video recorded by the assistant moderator whose role in this study was to operate and monitor the video recorder as well as the digital camera for photographs (Krueger, 2002).

At the end of the seventh week, in collaboration with the teacher participants we administered the first continuous assessment test for all groups. The test comprised of tasks such as; listen and write the sounds; write the words for different sounds; Read the word and draw the picture. However, the language tasks in the test were designed according to children's levels of progress through small group instruction (See Addendum, 1, DVD 1, Assessment One). The aim of the test was to inform the teachers on their instruction as well as obtaining feedback on the progress of the children as divided in the groups (Zygouris, 2001).

Thereafter the researcher led a reflective session with teachers to reflect on their instruction as well as children's progress. The reflections assisted us to re-plan for interactive sessions of the strategies that were not yet mastered by the teacher participants. I made note of the reflections in my reflective journal.

The teachers embarked on instruction of three letter syllables to children. The teachers modelled the reading of the syllables and children read the syllables thereafter. They led the children to formulate words using a combination of vowels, two letter syllable and three letter syllables. For instance e-mo-nde=emonde (potatoes). Since the formulation of syllables

and words at this level were becoming complex, we decided to devote three weeks for instruction and children's practice.

Figure 4.16 Teacher teaching three-letter syllable and word formation.

4.3.3.2.2 Vocabulary knowledge instruction (Week 11 to Week 13)

Since vocabulary knowledge deals with attaining a number of vocabulary and their comprehension in a given text (Proctor, Ucelli, Dalton and Snow, 2009), vocabulary instruction was deemed necessary in this study. Thus the three weeks were devoted on more practice on phonological awareness, vocabulary development and sentence construction. The teachers engaged children in forming words using the two-letter syllables; three-letter syllables and vowels of the alphabet. The teachers provided daily practice of these activities for children to acquire a lot of vocabulary. The vocabulary was supplemented by a variety of teacher drawn pictures to enhance reading comprehension. Then they guided the children to formulate sentences using the developed vocabulary both orally and written. They supported children to formulate sentences on drawn pictures. The range of the vocabulary was in the context of the content of the National Primary School Curriculum for Uganda: Primary Three (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2007).

A child forming words

Sample sentences made by the teacher
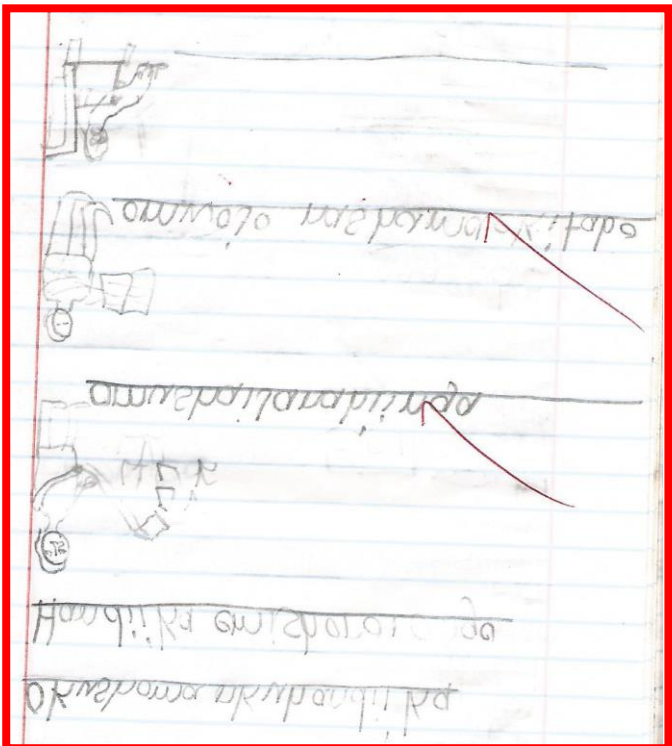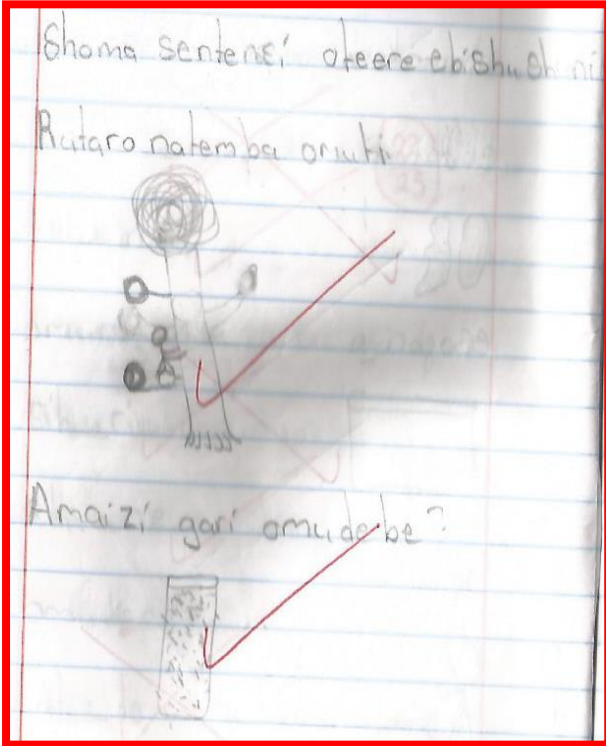
Writing sentences on pictures

Figure 4.17 Children's activity of vocabulary knowledge and sentence construction

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At the end of the thirteenth week of vocabulary instruction a second continuous assessment was administered. The test comprised of language tasks such as listen and write the words; listen and write the sentences;

picture comprehension and interpretation; reading and answering questions on the story (See Addendum 1, DVD 1, Assessment Two).

Thereafter, I held a focus group interview session with the teacher participants. In the discussion we reflected on teachers' instruction with regard to the letter sounds and vocabulary development. We also reflected on children's progress being guided by the outcomes of the test. The session was video recorded. In addition, I noted down the reflections in the researcher's reflective journal.

4.3.3.2.3 Reading comprehension instruction (Week 14 to Week 17)

In regard to reading comprehension instruction, teachers first engaged children in daily guided reading lessons with teacher-made stories. Thereafter each individual child would read aloud to the entire group and the teacher. The teacher would then ask well graded questions about the stories which were either oral or written. This was done to assist children develop fluency and meaning in what they read (Zygouris, 2001; Chou et al., 2012).

Figure 4.18 Teaching reading comprehension by using teacher- made text

Teachers conducted daily intensive practice of guided reading of teacher made stories for two weeks. After the practice with teacher- made stories teachers engaged children in reading assorted Runyankole story books collected from the school library. In small groups the teachers guided and discussed the stories with the children while prompting them to obtain meaning from the text as inculcating comprehension strategies (Dole, 2006). This was done so that children gain interest in reading as well as understanding what they read (Cummins, 2011). The teachers would model the reading; ask children to read aloud and silently; then ask carefully graded questions about the story both orally and written (Joubert et al., 2013, p. 221-223).

| Teacher guiding children to predict what is likely to be in the story book. | Individual children reading story book independently. |
| Teacher-children interaction about the story | Children reading story book in a small group. |

Figure 4.19 Teachers teaching reading comprehension using storybooks

This practice was done on a daily basis for two weeks. The four weeks concluded with a continuous assessment that comprised of listening and

writing assorted words; picture reading and interpretation and story comprehension (See Addendum 1, DVD 1, Assessment Three).

Thereafter we had a reflective session to reflect on the children's progress. The test results guided the reflections of the participants and the researcher on the instruction of reading comprehension and its impact on children's reading comprehension. The reflections were written in the researcher's journal.

4.3.3.2.4 Explicit instruction in English (Week 18 to Week 23)

Since the programme was posited by Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis, explicit instruction was also conducted in English in the last six weeks of the programme. This was done in order to investigate whether intensive instruction in Runyankole supported children to make some improvement in their reading comprehension in English. Using the programme strategies the teachers explicitly taught letter sounds of the English alphabet, blending of sounds to form words. They used similar activities as those in Runyankole to assist children to recognise and read the letter sounds and blending of sounds to form words.

Figure 4.20 Teacher guiding children to blend sounds and form words

Thereafter, the teachers guided children to form a variety of words which they later used to make sentences.
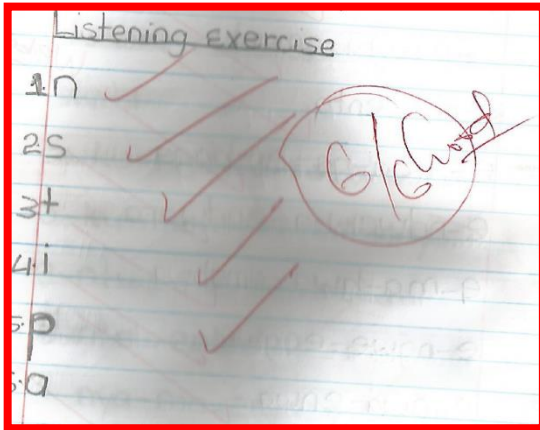
Sound recognition in English	Blending of sounds to form
Formulation of words	Formulation of sentences
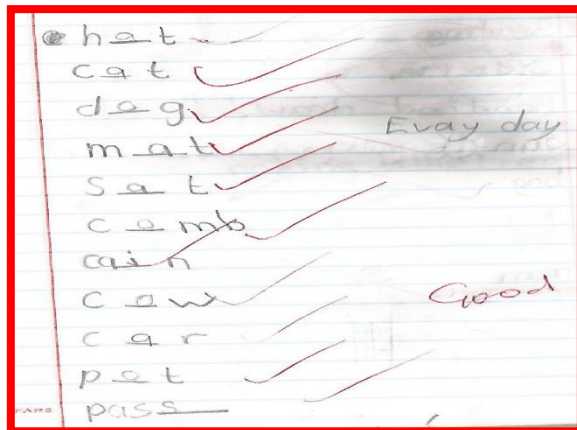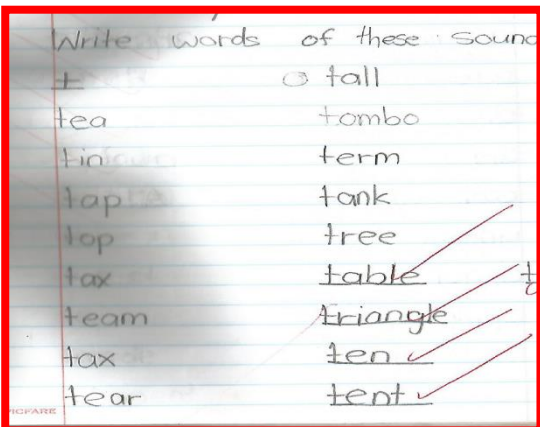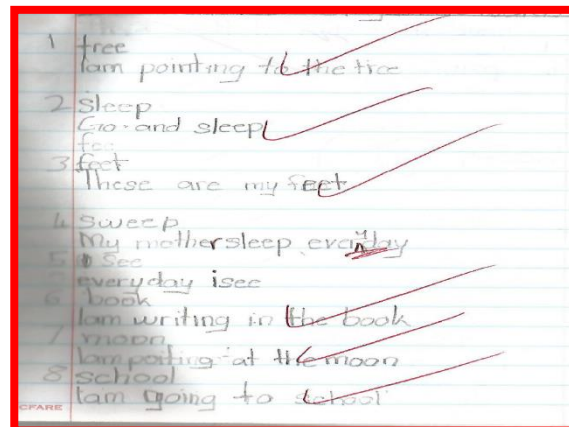
Figure 4.21 Children's activities of letter sound recognition, formulation of words and sentences

After six weeks we administered a continuous assessment in English that comprised of language tasks such as; listen and write the sounds; writing words of assorted letter sounds and read the sentence and draw. (See Addendum 1, DVD 1, Assessment Four). Thereafter we reflected on the test results. The reflections were written in the researcher's reflective journal and will be presented as data in the next chapter. Since the period of the study

had come to an end, the teachers stopped at explicit instruction of formulation of vocabulary and sentences in English.

4.3.4 Phase four: Evaluation of the balanced reading instruction programme (Week 24)

Since the methodology of this study is PAR and critical qualitative in nature, in collaboration with the research participants, we reflected and evaluated the programme. The evaluation was done in order to investigate the effectiveness of the programme towards improving teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children of this study. It was also conducted in order to establish whether children's challenges had been addressed through the programme. Thus after the intensive explicit instruction of reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English to bilingual children for twenty one weeks, we administered comprehension test as a final assessment to children in Runyankole. The test comprised of a reading text entitled 'Obunyina Kizza Azaara. The children read the text silently and answered the set questions both orally and written. After that we administered a test in English that comprised of listen and write, and reading aloud sentences. The outcomes of the tests informed the researcher and teacher participants of children's progress and improvement (See Addendum 1 DVD 1, Assessment Five and Six).

I then conducted a focus group interview session in order to obtain teacher participants' reflections on their participation in the programme and instruction as well as children's reading comprehension. The outcomes of the session were video-taped, analysed and presented as findings in the next chapter.

4.4 Implementation challenges

The teacher participants' reflected that the programme should have been implemented in all lower primary classes (primary one to primary three) since bilingual children in these classes also had challenges in reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English. The programme had been implemented in primary three on daily basis in the stipulated time allocation of teaching reading in the national curriculum of primary three. The teacher participants' reflections indicated that instruction of reading comprehension in English required similar time as that of Runyankole in the programme.

4.5 Recommendations on the implementation of the programme

Since reading comprehension was a major challenge to all children in lower primary classes, it was suggested that after the implementation of the programme, systematic and explicit instruction of reading comprehension (Zygouris, 2001) should be carried out in all the classes of lower primary classes (primary one to three) throughout the school year. This should be done in both Runyankole and English. Further recommendations are addressed in my final chapter.

4.6 Summary

This chapter provided a description of the activities carried out at different phases of the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. The programme was primarily implemented to empower teachers with strategies that could improve their instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. In the next chapter, I analyse the data obtained from the different phases and discuss the findings from different sets of data.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter three, I described the research paradigm, methodology, instruments for data collection and the data collection process with regard to the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. Chapter four described the activities conducted during the four phases of the designed balanced reading instruction programme. In chapter five, I present the data analysis and the findings obtained from the data collected at different implementation phases of the balanced reading instruction programme. The data was analysed in line with the research topic, questions and PAR methodology. The focus of this study was to empower teachers with instructional strategies they could use to improve reading comprehension of bilingual children under the programme.

The themes that emerged from the raw data were namely; instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children; teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages; teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English is important to bilingual children. The inductive analysis also helped me to identify different sub-themes as they emerged from the integrated data.

In the subsections that follow, I discuss the data analysis process and the themes and their subsequent sub-themes that emerged across all sets of data for this study. I also provide and discuss the participants' verbatim responses in support of the emerging themes as well as evidence of rigour and trustworthiness in the collected data.

5.2 The data analysis process
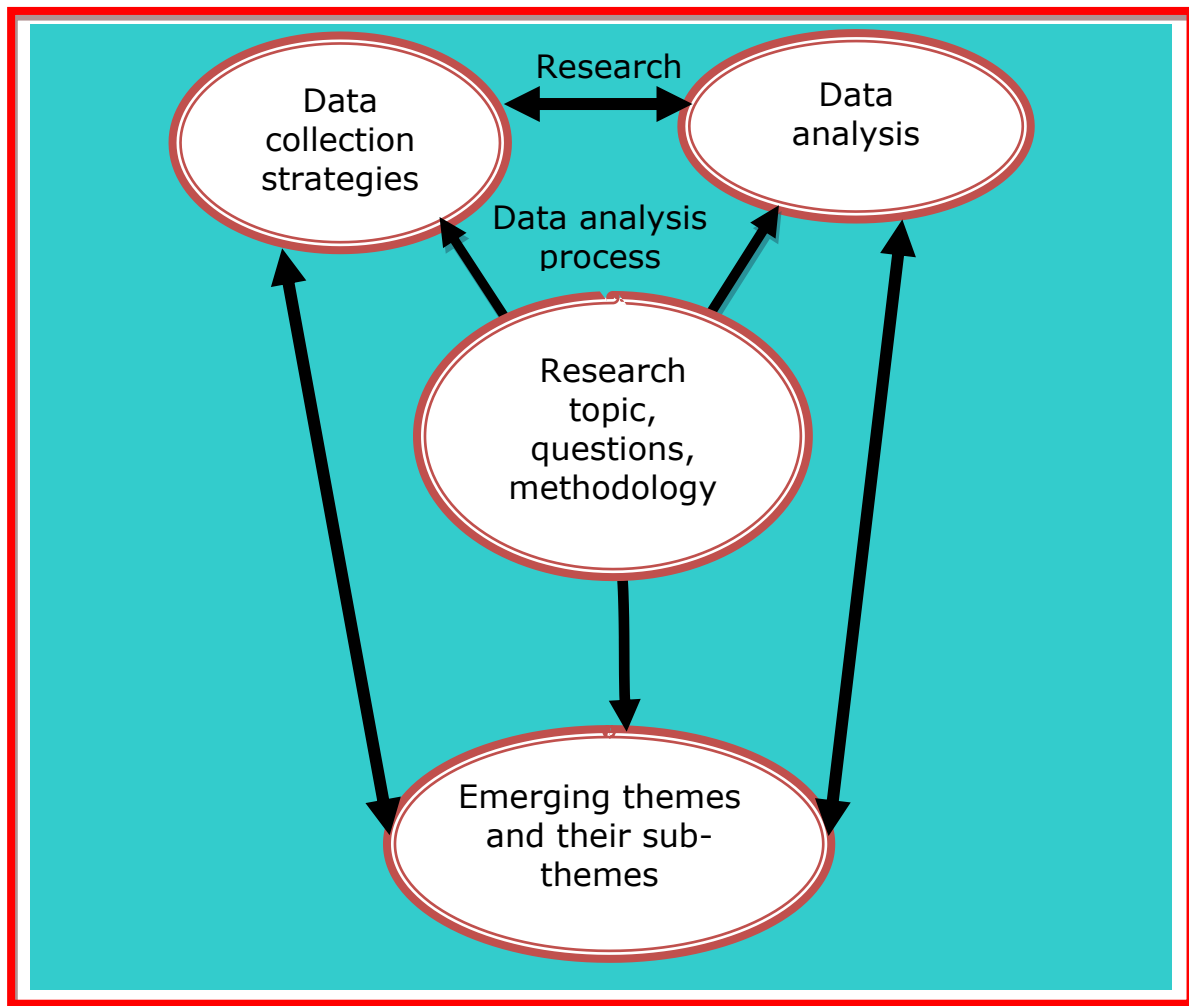
Figure 5.1 Data analysis process

The analysis model in figure 5.1 is used to explain the data collection and analysis process of the research process for the balanced reading instruction programme. The blue square represents the research process that comprises of data collection strategies, data analysis and the emerging themes and sub-themes. The middle circle represents the research topic, research questions and methodology which are the basis for the research process. The black arrows represent the data analysis process that involved working forth and back in the collected data to establish the emerging themes and sub-themes in accordance to the research topic, research questions and methodology.

5.2.1 Data analysis

The data collection and analysis were done co-currently throughout the research process. Data analysis commenced with video recorded data from the focus group interviews sessions with teacher participants. Using content analysis I transcribed teachers' responses in accordance to questions that guided the discussions and wrote them on A4 sheets. Thereafter, I transcribed video recorded lesson observations and wrote them on different A4 sheets. I studied and analysed line by line the transcriptions first for the focus group interviews and then the lesson observations. While analysing this data I formulated content analytical units (Maryring, 2000) that helped me to group the responses from questions, comments and remarks from the lesson observations to similar patterns that emerged. I then colour coded these responses, comments and remarks that were re-occurring to ensure identification of themes.

The field notes data was collected and documented during direct observations in the researcher's reflective journal during the lessons. The field notes contained my reflections on the strategies, activities, assessment tests and interactions teachers engaged children in when teaching reading comprehension in the classroom throughout the programme. In addition, I recorded my reflections in the reflective journal on the progress of the balanced reading instruction programme in regard to the cyclic process of PAR methodology. I studied, analysed the field notes in order to obtain information about teachers' participation in the programme and their improvement in the teaching of reading comprehension to bilingual children. I then colour coded the practices to establish patterns that were similar to those obtained from the data of focus group interview sessions.

I analysed teachers' lesson plan books with an intention to obtain information about teachers' effective preparation and use of strategies and activities, as stipulated in the programme, in their instruction of reading comprehension to children. I also analysed children's activity books,

assessment records and photographs taken as children were engaged in written activities. I did this purposely to obtain information on the nature of activities given to children for practice. This data was used to supplement the data analysed on the effectiveness of the programme towards improving teacher's instruction and children's reading comprehension.

Using the inductive analysis as described in (section 3.5), I critically studied and established re-occurring similar patterns from all the data of focus group interviews, lesson observations and the researcher's reflective journal. Thereafter, I integrated the patterns and categorised them into themes. The integrated data provided three broad themes with their distinct sub-themes. The themes and their sub-themes are explained in the next section.

5.3 Emerged themes and sub-themes

The data was analysed in themes bearing in mind of the research questions and PAR process. Analysis of all data such as transcriptions of focus group interview sessions and observed lessons (as field notes) as well as researchers' reflections resulted into the emergence of themes and sub-themes. The themes and their subsequent sub-themes that emerged as summarised in Figure 5.2.

Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children

Sub-themes:

1.1   Relevance of instruction in the native language to bilingual children

1.2   Strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children

1.3   Teachers' fears of teaching the native language to bilingual children

Theme 2: Teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages

Sub-themes:

2.1   Phonics instruction of the alphabet in the native language

2.2   Teaching vocabulary using phonics instruction in the native language

2.3   Direct instruction of reading comprehension in the native language

Theme 3: Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English is important to bilingual

Sub-themes:

3.1   Realisation of their knowledge to teach reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

3.2   Strategies for teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

3.3   Positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

Figure 5.2 Summary of themes and sub-themes

In the sections that follow, I present and discuss the themes and sub-themes namely; instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children; teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages; teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in

both the native language (Runyankole) and English is important to bilingual children. I present excerpts and extracts from the data to support the emerged themes and sub-themes. Some of the extracts are given in Runyankole but translated in English. I also indicate the addenda from which they were extorted. The excerpts and extracts are written using pseudonyms for teacher participants (A, B, C, D) and for children (1, 2, and 3) as indirect participants.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children

Instruction in this study implies explicit teaching in the classroom context using children's native language which in this case is Runyankole. Thus this theme emerged as instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children.

In the subsections that follow, I discuss the theme with its emerging sub-themes; relevance of instruction in the native language to bilingual children; strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children; and teachers' fears of teaching the native language to bilingual children.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Relevance of instruction in the native language to bilingual children

The participating teachers (A, B, C, D) said that they used Runyankole as the language of instruction in their teaching of primary three bilingual children. Runyankole was used since it was the language children speak at home. The focus group interview sessions also showed that all the participants (A, B, C, D) used Runyankole to freely express their views and opinions during the discussions. Thus it was their native language as well as the language of communication. All the teachers mentioned that Runyankole

assisted them to make children understand the meanings of words and structures of English.

To emphasise the importance of instruction in Runyankole, participant B specifically narrated that:

"…*When I am teaching English vocabulary and sentence structures to children and they do not understand what they are reading, I use Runyankole to explain the meaning of words and sentences to them. In so doing my children comprehend the words and sentences. I do this in order to make children understand what I am teaching…*" (Focus Group Interview, 17 March 2016).

Participant C added that:

"…*I use Runyankole and translate the words. For instance, if I am teaching 'What is this?, This is a cup.' I ask them ekikopo nimukimanya and they say yes. Then I say cup nekikopo. I translate the sentence into Runyankole to be Eki nekikopo. Automatically children understand the meaning of the sentence. I do this because I want children to understand what they are learning…*" (Focus group interview 1, 17 March 2016).

During the focus group interview sessions and lesson observations, I noticed that all the participants freely expressed themselves in Runynakole. They taught with confidence reading comprehension to their primary three children while using Runyankole as the language of instruction (Field Notes in Reflective Journal, 16 June 2016).

The above sub-theme revealed that instruction in the native language is important for it enhanced understanding among bilingual children. It also enhanced teachers' confidence in dialogues and teaching in the classroom. The next sub-theme to be discussed is strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children

Some of the strategies teachers used for the native language instruction as revealed in this study included mixing Runyankole and English, translation of English words to Runyankole and oral reading. During the focus group interview session (17 March 2016), all the participating teachers seemed to indicate that the strategies they used contributed to children's reading comprehension challenges.

For instance participant B explained:

"…Most of our teaching is oral. When we speak the words in Runyankole, the children understand them very well. But when it comes to reading and writing the words by themselves, it becomes a big challenge…."

Participant A also had this to say:

"…In our teaching, we also mix Runyankole and English. For example when teaching reading in English, at times we use local language instead of teaching English in English. Eventually mixing of two languages confuses children and they do not understand what they are reading…"

Participant C added by demonstrating the oral teaching strategy:

"…When I am teaching the word 'embuzi (goat) I write it on a flash card embuzi. Then I say it aloud three times when children are listening. Then I ask them to read after me. When they have finished I ask them 'Nimumanya embuzi? (Do you know a goat?) And they say 'yes'. Then I cut the word into three syllables; e- mbu- zi and ask them to read with me e-mbu-zi = embuzi…"

All the participants also highlighted that the strategies they used were inclined to encourage more cram work in children than understanding what was being taught. In support of this participants (A, B, C, D) said;

"*Okushomesa kwaitu nakwo nikuretera abaana obutashomagye*" (Our teaching also makes children not to learn reading). In this study, it was found out the children in the study context faced reading comprehension challenges in both their native language and English as described in the identification of the problem phase (Section, 4.3.1). Therefore, the strategies highlighted in this sub-theme could be one of the causes of reading comprehension challenges among these children.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Teachers' fears of teaching the native language to bilingual children

Teacher participants' responses from the focus group interview session (Focus group interview 1, 17 March 2016) indicated fears of teaching native language to bilingual children. These fears included uncertainty of the strategies as well as insufficient training in native language instruction. In regard to the uncertainty of the strategies, without any provocation participant A said: "*Teaching sounds is a challenge in both the local language and English because we attained few strategies to teach them.*" In agreement with participant A, participants (B, C, D) further explained:

"…*Teaching is not only a challenge in sounds but also in other areas such as blending of sounds, vocabulary and reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English…*"

In the case of the fear of insufficient training, all the participants reported that they did not attain sufficient strategies during their prior training to enable them to effectively teach aspects such as sounds, vocabulary development and reading comprehension in Runyankole and English. Therefore, all the teacher participants unanimously requested for professional development sessions before participating in the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. They particularly pointed out that they needed a programme that could help them

to teach children to understand what they read. For instance participant A had this to say:

"… If we could get ways of teaching correct letter sounds, formulation of words and reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English, then we will benefit a great deal from this programme. Even the parents of our children are complaining that our children do not read…" (Focus Group Interview, 17 March, 2016).

Teachers' fears highlighted in the above sub-theme indicated that the participants needed professional development sessions for them to improve their instruction of reading comprehension. The sessions on the instruction of reading comprehension in the native language would inculcate confidence in teachers to effectively implement the balanced reading instruction programme. In the next theme, instruction of reading comprehension in the native language to bilingual children is expounded in terms of data collected during the act and observe phase of the programme.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children important to understanding both languages

All the teacher participants (A, B, C, D) acknowledged that they needed strategies that could help them teach aspects of reading comprehension namely sounds, vocabulary development and reading comprehension. During the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme, the teacher participants were trained in the strategies for teaching sounds, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Thereafter they conducted explicit instruction of reading comprehension in the native language to bilingual children as discussed in (Section 4.3.3). The data collected during the act and observe phase directed this theme. Teachers' expressions and thoughts

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Phonics instruction of the alphabet in the native language

are explicated in relation to the theme and its emerging sub-themes in the subsequent sections.

In the third week of the balanced reading instruction programme, the teacher participants were trained on the instruction of the alphabet of Runyankole using the phonics instruction as described in (4.3.3.1 Session One). Thereafter, each teacher participant conducted a demonstration lesson on the instruction of the alphabet using the phonics instruction (DVD 2 Interactive session 6). From the demonstrations, it became clear that the teachers were able to use phonics instruction to teach the alphabet of Runyankole. This was indicated by teachers' expressions of happiness they exhibited through smiles and clapping of hands as represented in 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3 Representation for teachers' expression of happiness

Through the demonstration sessions the teachers realised that a number of Runyankole letter sounds were similar to those of English. For instance

/k/,/t/, /d/, /b/ had similar sounds in the two languages. They observed that letters such as /q/ and /x/ were not included in Runyankole and j sounded differently from that of English.
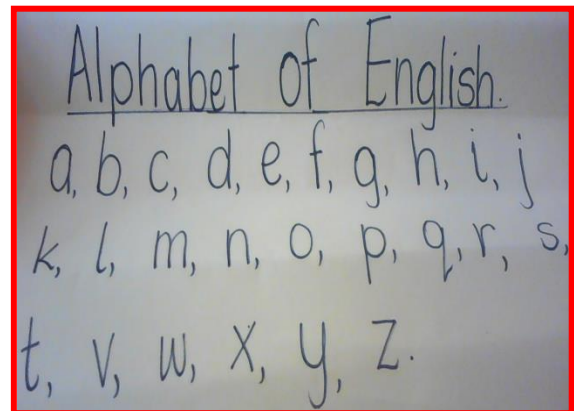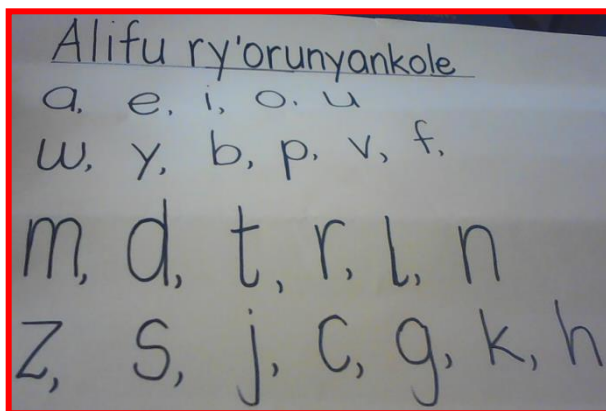
Figure 5.4 Representation for the alphabet of Runyankole and English

In unison response, all the teachers (A, B, C, D) said *"Aaah!! hati twamanya entaniso eri ahagati ya alifu y'orunyankole n'oruzungu."* (Aaah!! Now we have known the difference between the alphabet and their corresponding sounds of Runyankole and English) (DVD 2 Interactive session 6). This implies that they would not mix the sounds of Runyankole and English when teaching letter-sound recognition.In my lesson observations while in the

field, I was impressed that the teachers effectively modelled the saying of the sounds while using similar sounds in their surroundings. I also observed that they demonstrated with confidence sound recognition, blending of vowels and consonants to form syllables to children (Field Notes in Reflective Journal, 17 April, 2016; 16 June, 2016). This was also reflected in the activities the teachers gave children for practice as represented in the extracts in figure 5.5. The activities showed that children recognised the letter sounds and blended them in syllables.
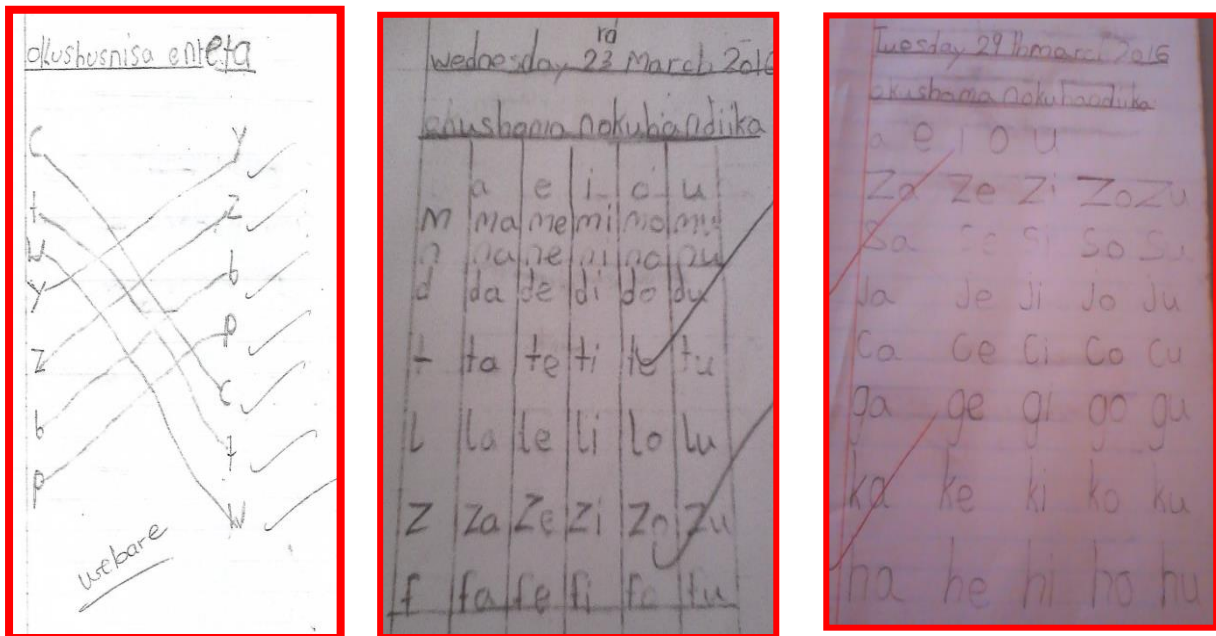
Figure 5.5 Children's activities on sound recognition and making syllables

Teachers' expressions revealed that they ably used phonics instruction to teach vocabulary to primary three children. This was exhibited through the demonstration sessions (DVD 1 Interactive session, demonstration session 2). The teachers in pairs made words from the syllables such as *o-mu-ti; e-mo-to-ka; o-mu-ka.* They participated in their groups expressing joy and confidence for learning to develop vocabulary from the syllables. At the end of their presentations, the teachers were happy and clapped for themselves for the achievement made as represented in figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Representation of teachers' expression of happiness and joy

In a cheerful mood participant B exclaimed: "Kyaba too good" (This is too good!!!). During my lesson observations, I observed that the teachers ably guided the children to make words from syllables as represented in figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7 Representation of teacher guiding children to form words

This was further reflected in the activities teachers gave children to practice. The activities indicated the children were able to make words from the syllables as instructed by the teachers. This is illustrated by representation in figure 5.8.
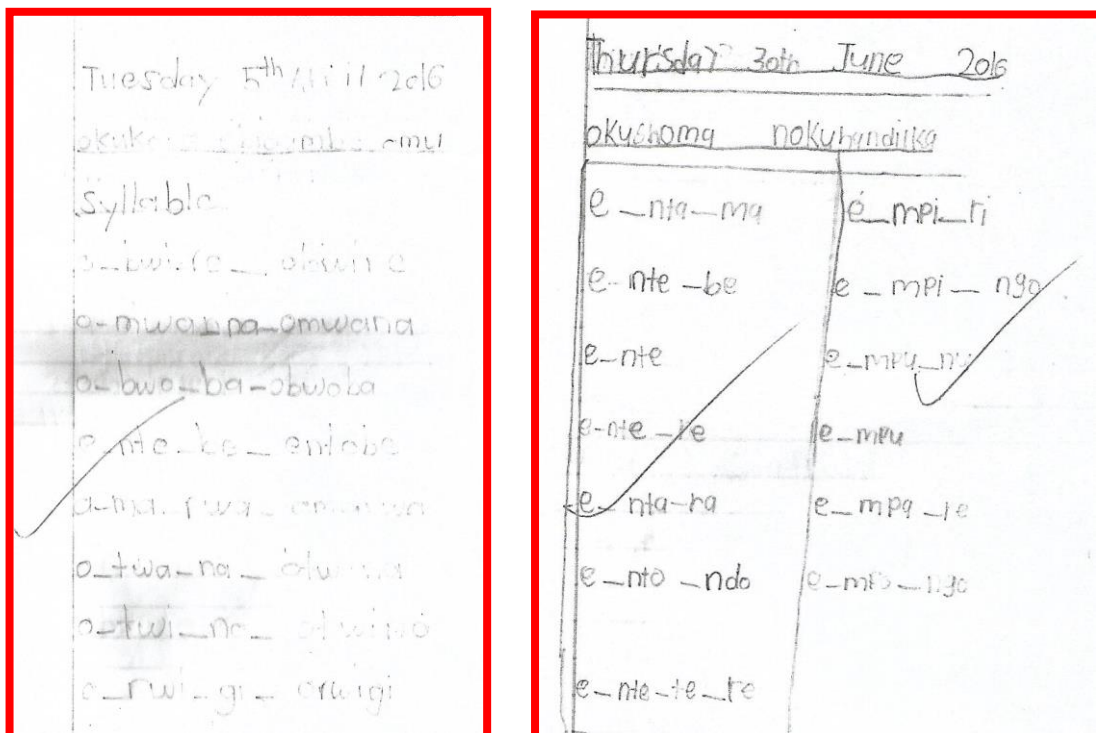
Figure 5.8 Representation of children's activity on word formation

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Direct instruction of reading comprehension in the native language

In this study teaching reading comprehension was found to be a challenge to teacher participants. Thus teachers were trained on the strategies of teaching reading comprehension (DVD 2 Interactive session 5). Thereafter the teachers conducted explicit teaching of reading comprehension during the act and observe phase of the programme. I asked the teachers what they thought about teaching reading comprehension in Runyankole as their native language. The teachers said that as they participated in the reading comprehension interactive session, they realised that the questions compelled children to re-read, understand and identify answers from the story. They pointed out that such a question "*Kokushanga nyina Kengoro ateekire yakuha ebyokurya nokoraki?*" (If you find the mother of Kengoro eating and she gives food, what do you do?), assists children to understand the story and make predictions.

Participant C: added: *Omwana naba yaba kafuru omukushoma* (Speaks with a big smile on her face). (The child can now comprehend what she is reading).

All the participants (A, B, C, D) responded: *"Aaah!!! Omwana naba yayeega okushoma."* (Aah!! The child now knows how to read). (All teachers spoke with happiness expressed by smiling faces).

In our reflections (Reflective Journal, 14 July, 2016) on teaching reading comprehension to children, the teachers reported that they ably taught reading comprehension in the native language after participating in the interactive sessions. For instance participant C said that she was very happy to see that most of her children answered the questions set on the story in accordance to the knowledge she attained.

Participant A: "*I can ably teach reading comprehension. My children answered the questions on the story while writing in full sentences. I need to*

help them to do more practice in reading books individually and set questions on the stories for them to answer."

Participant B: "My children answered questions about the story which was good with some spelling errors in their vocabulary which I will work on."

In my lesson observations on teaching reading comprehension, I observed that generally the teacher participants were very happy to see that they taught reading comprehension and children understood what they read which was good (Field Notes in Reflective Journal, 11 August, 2016).

Teachers' perceptions in the above theme indicated that teachers under this study ably applied phonics instruction in the teaching of the alphabet, vocabulary and reading comprehension in Runyankole. Consequently, their instruction supported primary three children to read stories with understanding. Teachers' instruction of children's native language also enhanced children's understanding of sound-symbol correspondence (Benson, 2004) as well as reading comprehension.

5.3.3 Theme 3:Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English is important to bilingual children

In the context of this study, teachers' empowerment implied enabling teachers to obtain strategies that could improve their attitude and instruction towards reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. This was done through involving teachers in the professional development sessions, demonstrations, reflective sessions and explicit instruction of reading comprehension while using the balanced reading instruction programme. Teachers' perceptions with regard to their improvement in the instruction of reading comprehension are expounded in this theme and its subsequent emerging sub-themes.

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Realisation of their knowledge to teach reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

During the evaluation phase of this study, I conducted the focus group interview session with the participants (Focus Group Interview, 28 November, 2016). I asked teachers (A, B, C, D) to give their perceptions in regard to their participation in the balanced reading instruction programme. In response, all the participating teachers acknowledged that the programme helped them to know how to teach reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children.

For instance Participant A had this to say:

"… At the beginning of this project, I had a lot of fear that the strategies we trained in this programme were not similar with those we have been using to teach reading comprehension. So, I saw these strategies very new to me. Before, we were not teaching children sounds or even blending sounds to form syllables or words. But now we can teach them very well. Thank you!! (as she smiles expressing the joy of what she has achieved in the programme)."

Participant C said: *"I did not know how to teach sounds. I have taught sounds and now children know how to read and write. Before the programme, my children were not able to understand and answer questions on a given text both orally and written. But now my children can read, understand the text and answer the set questions in written form by themselves."*

Participant B: *"…My children are able to answer questions about the text I give them. They can write the answers in full sentences. This is a result of knowing how to teach reading comprehension to these children."*

In my lesson observations, I observed that teachers engaged children in different activities that enhanced reading comprehension. These activities included reading the words and draw the pictures; reading sentences and drawing pictures; matching pictures with their words or sentences; making sentences with the learnt words; writing words that contained different sounds and syllables and reading texts silently and then teachers asking questions about them (Field Notes in Reflective Journal, 16 June, 2016; 14 July, 2016). Through these activities, I realised that teachers understood the strategies adapted in the programme and thus enabled them to teach reading comprehension to children.

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Strategies for teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

Teachers in this study were asked the strategies they used that enabled them to teach reading comprehension to their children. Teachers' perceptions revealed that strategies, such as phonics instruction, cut-out letters, individual reading of texts and books enhanced by answering both oral and written questions, aided them in their instruction.

In responding to the strategies used in their instruction participant B said:

"… *Before the programme, we were teaching while mixing sentences and words. We did not know how to teach sounds. We would begin with teaching sentences to children, yet the children did not know the sounds. But now, I have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading that is from sounds to syllables, then to words and sentences and finally to reading stories and texts (*Focus Group Interview, 28 November, 2016).

Participant C responded "…Formulating questions about the story. My children can use the story and answer the questions very well."

Participant D added:

"… I did not know how to make cut out letter cards and give them to children to sort out, make syllables and words. Now I write them on hard card boards, cut them, give them to children and they read the letters while holding them."

Participant C further said: *"…Teaching sounds first in Runyankole has helped our children to learn to read with understanding the texts written in both Runyankole and English. This is because Runyankole letter sounds are similar to those of English. So learning of the English sounds has become much easier to our children under this programme."*

In addition to the strategies expressed by the participants, I noticed that teachers used small group story book reading in their lessons. They interacted with the children on the stories as well as encouraging them to do individual reading practice. They used reading aloud to children as well as children reading aloud to the teacher to enhance fluency in reading (Field Notes in Reflective Journal, 26 October, 2016; 24 November, 2016).

5.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children

In this study teachers' responses clearly showed that the participants developed a positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. The positive attitude was indicated by expressions such as thank you, smiling faces, and clapping of hands that accompanied their voices.

For instance participant D said:

"… Thank you Madam. I take this opportunity to thank you!!! Since this programme started, I feel confident that I can firmly teach reading

comprehension to children even if I am transferred to another school (She said this raising her arms very happy stressing her confidence). Secondly, this programme has instilled in us the love and spirit of teaching reading comprehension. Thank you so much!!!"

Participant A added:

"…As for me, I had the poorest group of children in reading comprehension. In my heart I asked myself, will these children ever read? Surprisingly, as I taught these children, they started reading sounds, then blended sounds. Some started reading sentences and short stories of four sentences. Among these there are four children who can write a short letter to their parents in Runyankole in addition to the four sentences. Thank you very much for this programme."

Participant B further responded:

"…When we started this programme, our children did not have the zeal for reading. But now they have the zeal and interested in reading lessons and reading different story books. They can even recognise different sounds and read words and sentences by themselves. Thank you!!

Participant C also responded:

"… We have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading comprehension which is good!!!

While evaluating the programme we noted that children's performance in ongoing assessment tests showed improvement in reading comprehension. For instance twenty-eight of the forty children were able to comprehend the texts read as well as answering questions on them. Twelve children were able to read and write words and sentences. Yet before the programme twenty three of the forty children neither recognised sounds nor read words before the programme. Seventeen children could only read words and sentences at that time. In response to children's performance the teachers

felt happy as expressed by smiles on their faces (Focus Group Interview, 28 November, 2016).

Teachers' expressions discussed in the above theme showed that the programme not only improved their instruction but also their attitude towards teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children. Consequently, teachers' instruction improved children's reading comprehension.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, it was found out that the balanced reading instruction programme addressed participants' challenges of instruction that impinged on children's reading comprehension. Teachers' perceptions, as participants of this study, revealed that they were empowered with strategies that brought improvement in their instruction and attitude towards the teaching of reading comprehension to bilingual children. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings and recommendations as implications of the study.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

The research study presented data on the balanced reading instruction intervention for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The study was specifically conducted in Nyakayojo primary school, Mbarara Municipality-Uganda with teachers of primary three as direct participants while children as indirect participants. The methods of inquiry included; focus group interviews, observation, document analysis and a researcher's reflective journal. These methods helped me to obtain a qualitative in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the balanced reading instruction programme towards improving teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. Data analysis was guided by my research topic, questions and methodology. The findings are presented in themes with their sub-themes that emerged from the integrated analysed data.

In this chapter, I discuss and interpret the findings against the literature on teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. I further discuss findings with reference to the conceptual framework of this study. I also make recommendations on how teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children could be improved. Finally, I present my contribution to this knowledge domain and possible opportunities for further inquiry.

6.2 A synoptic overview of the study

In this section, I present the synopsis of the preceding five chapters of my study. This study was about balanced reading instruction for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The purpose of this study was to explore the balanced reading instruction as a programme to equip teachers with strategies to improve their instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. Through this programme, the study aimed at addressing different reading comprehension difficulties experienced by bilingual children.

Chapter one focused on the background and orientation to the study. The chapter introduced the reader to the research problem, rationale for the research and the purpose of the study. The background to the study and rationale guided me in the framing of the main research question and its sub-questions. In this chapter, I briefly discussed the research design and methodology, data analysis and ethical considerations for the study. Finally, I outlined the structure of the study.

In chapter two, I explored the literature review with regard to reading comprehension and its related difficulties as well as empirically proven successful strategies for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children. The literature further focused on exploring balanced reading instruction and its components. The strategies and the components made a basis on which I adapted and implemented the balanced reading instruction programme. In the literature, I also explored Cummins' (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport's (1984) empowerment theory which assisted me in the understanding and formulation of the emerging theoretical and conceptual framework of this study.

In chapter three, I firstly discussed participatory action research as the research methodology as well the context of this study. Secondly, the data collection methods and data analysis strategies were described. Finally, the

ethical considerations, rigour and trustworthiness of the study and my role as a researcher were set out.

Chapter four explored the rationale for the design and implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. It further presented a detailed description of the content and activities conducted in different phases of the programme. The chapter concluded with reporting the challenges and recommendations in relation to the implementation of the programme.

Chapter five presented the data analysis process of collected data which emerged into three broad themes. The themes illuminated that teachers' participation in the programme improved their understanding and instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children.

In chapter six, the final chapter, I present the discussion of findings, recommendations and implications to the study. In the subsequent sections, I firstly present the summary of themes in table 6.1 and literature control as indicated in tables 6.3; 6.4 and 6.5 respectively. Secondly, I discuss the findings according to themes in response to research questions and the conceptual framework. Finally, my contribution to knowledge, suggested recommendations as well as future research, limitations to the study and conclusion are presented. In table 6.1, I offer the summary of themes in accordance to teachers' responses.

Table 6.1 Summary of themes according to teachers' responses

Themes	Participating teachers' responses
Theme 1 Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children.	**PA-D:** "I use Runyankole to explain the meaning of words and sentences for children to understand what I am teaching. We mix Runyankole and English when teaching. We translate English words to Runyankole for children to comprehend. We do more of oral teaching in Runyankole than reading and writing. Teaching of sounds, vocabulary and reading comprehension is a challenge in our local language and English."

Theme 2

Teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages. | "We have known the difference between the alphabet and their corresponding sounds of Runyankole and English. A question such as 'If you find the mother of Kengoro eating and she gives you food, what do you do?' assists children to understand the story and makes predictions. I can ably teach reading comprehension. My children answered questions on the story while writing in full sentences which was good. I need to help them to do more practice in reading books individually and spelling errors in their vocabulary." |
| Theme 3

Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language and English is important to bilingual children. | "At the beginning of this project, I had a lot of fear as the strategies were very new to me. But now I can use them to teach very well. My children can read, understand the text and answer questions on the story by themselves. This is a result of knowing how to teach reading comprehension to these children. I feel confident that I can firmly teach reading comprehension to children even if I am transferred to another school. I have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading. The programme has instilled in us love and spirit of teaching reading comprehension. Our children now have the zeal and interest in reading lessons and reading books." |

6.3 Findings from balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of bilingual children: literature control

In the next section, I present the literature control in relation to the three themes and their sub-themes in different ways. I present the existing literature to support my findings in table 6.2 as well as my interpretive discussions. In table 6.3 I present contradicting existing literature with my research findings. Finally table 6.4, I present silences in the data.

Table 6.2 Literature control of themes and sub-themes indicating existing literature to support my research findings

Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children			
Sub-themes	Author and year	Existing knowledge	Interpretive discussions
1.1 Relevance of instruction in the native language to bilingual children	Kioko (2015); Rodriguez (2014)	Using the native language in teaching and early education enhances students' better understanding as well as achieving success in the mainstream classroom.	In the focus group interview session the teachers expressed that they used native language to explain the meaning of words and sentences in English in order to

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			enhance comprehension of English. The teachers also expressed that learning the native language provides a good foundation for learning English among children.
	Munhuweyi and Masuku (2002)	The primary language is used as a medium of instruction so that the child gets opportunities to learn basic concepts in his own language and to give him confidence to express himself without inhibitions imposed by the insufficient mastery of the medium of instruction.	The teachers in this study said that they used Runyankole which is both children's native language and medium of instruction in lower primary classes. It was also their native language which they used to freely express themselves as well as explaining abstract concepts when teaching English to their children.
	Chapele (1999)	Using L1 is for presenting meaning. When students need a new word or grammatical structure, they access it through translation into their L1. This can come from the teacher or a dictionary or through an explanation from the teacher.	The teachers in this study explained that they use Runyankole to translate words and structures in English lessons for children to grasp the meaning.
1.2 Strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children	Nankindu, Kirunda and Ogavu (2015)	Primary teachers in Uganda use strategies such as mixing English with other strategies and code switching to facilitate literacy instruction.	In this study teachers indicated that during their instruction of reading comprehension, they mix Runyankole and English.

Theme 2: Teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages

Sub-themes	Author and year	Existing knowledge	Interpretive discussions
2.1 Phonics instruction of alphabet in the native language	Alison (2016); Ford and Palacios (2015)	Reading instruction of Spanish as a native language in the United states as well as a syllable language begins with the teaching of five vowels followed by consonants. Then the children are taught to combine the vowels with consonants to form open syllables. The syllables that follow a consonant-vowel pattern represent the most frequently occurring syllable pattern in Spanish.	In this study the teachers demonstrated the teaching of the alphabet in Runyankole to children by; starting with sound recognition followed by blending of vowel sounds with consonants to form syllables. The teachers also indicated that they were able to differentiate between

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			the sounds of English and Runyankole.
	Correy (2011)	For children to start reading a phonetic language, teach sounds of the individual letters and then combine them to form two letters which the children can sound out.	In this study, teachers indicated that they were able to teach sounds of the individual letters of the alphabet in Runyankole. They also taught children to read and blend the individual sounds to form syllables.
2.2 Teaching vocabulary using phonics instruction in the native language	Alison (2016)	Teach students to build words with open syllables for example pa-ta= pata. They can practice spell and write the words using magnetic letters. Word building starts with open syllables then two open syllables and progresses to three syllable words.	In this study, teachers' expressions revealed that they ably taught children to form words in Runyankole using vowels, two and three letter syllables while using cut-out letters cards.
	Correy (2011)	When children have been engaged in practice of combining two letter sounds and are comfortable with them, then they can start forming words with more letter combinations.	The teachers first engaged children in the practice of formulation words that comprised of vowels and two letter syllable. Thereafter they engaged in activities to practice forming words combining vowels, two and three letter syllables.
Direct instruction of reading comprehension in the native language	Ford and Palcios (2015)	Engage children in interactive re-alouds for them to build comprehension skills and expand their vocabulary.	In this study, teachers conducted interactive story reading lessons and asked questions about the stories read to enhance children's comprehension.
	Katherine, Stahl and Garcia (2015)	Teachers can use directed reading-thinking activity. In this activity a teacher selects and segments an authentic text into meaningful units of about two or three pages and leads a discussion in which students establish their purpose for reading the text. The teacher then guides the students to generate predictions of what is to happen in the next segment. Then she lets the students to read or listen to the text. Finally the teacher leads a small group discussion of the text as students confirm or disconfirm their predictions.	In this study teachers guided the children to predict what was likely to be in their story books. They then let children read one story at a time. They would then engage the children in their groups to answer questions on the story both oral and written.

In this study the |

| | Semingson, Pole and Tommerdahl, (2015) | Use of shared reading, a model of teachers reading aloud which integrates vocabulary instruction and lessons on the mechanics and skills of reading. Such skills include phonemic awareness, phonics, punctuation, sight words and comprehension. | teachers individually modelled reading aloud stories in Runyankole to children in their respective small groups. The children then read aloud to the entire group and the teacher.

They acknowledged that interactive story reading lessons accompanied with carefully graded questions assisted children to comprehend what they read in either Runyankole or English. The teachers however pointed out that they lacked the skill of formulating appropriate questions which needed more practice while on the programme. |

Theme 3: Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language and English is important to bilingual children			
Sub-theme	Author and year	Existing knowledge	Interpretive discussion
3.2 Strategies for teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children	Breiseth (2010)	When teaching comprehension, build students' background knowledge by walking through the story guiding them to study the pictures and illustration in relation to the title. This can be followed by a brief oral discussion about the story to support students to identify important information as they read. Thereafter, identify words ought to be known by students to enhance their reading. Explicitly teach these words and guide them to connect them with the pictures and illustrations in the story. After reading ask students carefully	In this study, teachers prompted children to predict the events in the story books through the use of the pictures and illustrations. They also formulated different levels of questions which they asked children both orally and written to assess their

		graded questions in terms of literal, interpretive and applied levels to check their comprehension. Finally engage students in activities to summarise what they have read such as retelling the story or using the key words in text to write a story.	comprehension.
	On-line ell.tamucc.edu/files/modules_3ppt	While teaching comprehension firstly the teacher models what is good reading to the children. Then reads with the children. Thereafter, children read independently the story books while the teacher guides and scaffolds their reading. After independent reading, conduct teacher –children interaction on the story. Finally encourage children to read more books provided in the classroom library.	In this study I observed lessons in which teachers modelled reading to children and conducted teacher-interaction sessions on story books. They also made children read different story books in their native language. Thereafter they applied these strategies when teaching comprehension in English.
	McCarthy (2013)	Use of visual objects, illustrations, gestures and clear contexts of conversation in the teaching of the first language supports the understanding of what is read and heard.	In this study teachers used pictures, illustrations and interactive story book reading sessions that supported children comprehend what they read in both their native language and English.

The literature confirms the findings of this study that native language is paramount in teachers' instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. The findings of this study are also in agreement with statements in the literature that a variety of strategies are utilised in the instruction of reading comprehension in children's native language as a basis for teaching English. Incorporation of these strategies in the balanced reading instruction programme improved teachers' attitude and instruction of reading comprehension firstly in the native language and then in English to bilingual children which emerged as new insight in this study.

Table 6.3 Research findings contradicting existing literature

Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children				
Sub-theme	Author and year	Existing knowledge	Contradicting with what is known	Interpretive discussion
1.2 Strategies for the native language instruction to bilingual children	Grosjean (2015); Baker (2011)	One person one language strategy is concerned with using the dominant language to children acquiring two languages simultaneously.	In this study teachers were mixing Runyankole and English in their instruction of reading instead of either teaching reading Runyankole in Runyankole or English in English.	The teachers' instruction while mixing the two languages indicated as one of the causes of reading comprehension challenges of children.
	Schmitt (1985)	Bilingual teachers can use transitional as a method whereby they teach children in both languages primarily in the native language first and then increasingly in English as	In this study, teachers taught children in both languages, Runyankole being the primary language and English the second language. However, they said that they mixed the two languages in	Teachers in this study lacked strategies for teaching reading comprehension in Runyankole as well as English.

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Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children				
		students' proficiency in the native language increases.	teaching reading comprehension which confused children to comprehend what they read.	
	Cummins (2000)	Comprehensive instructional support in the native language (L1) yields improved results in terms of cognitive, linguistic and academic growth among students being taught using the transitional approach.		In this study teachers lacked prior intensive professional development support to teach reading comprehension in both the native language and English.

Findings of this study contradict the literature. The literature indicates that during the instruction of bilingual children the native language should be comprehensively taught for them to obtain academic language proficiency. Thereafter, they can be introduced to English as a second language while their proficiency also increases (Cummins, 2000, p. 187; Scmitt, 1985). In this study, teachers taught reading comprehension while mixing the native language and English in spite of the native language being used as a medium of instruction. As a result children would be confused and could not comprehend what they read. The reason might be that these teachers lacked

relevant strategies for teaching reading comprehension in the native language.

In table 6.4, I discuss the silences that emerged from the analysis of the data; across all sets of data.

6.4 Silences in the data

In this section, I discuss the silences that emerged during the data analysis across all sets of data collected through the strategies.

Table 6.4 Silences in the data

Silences
-Silence is indicated in the teachers' acknowledgement of their lack of prior training in strategies for teaching reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English.
-The silence of the acknowledgement of the possibility that teachers' instruction as a cause of children's reading comprehension challenges.
-There is silence on the magnitude of children's reading comprehension difficulties in both their native language and English by the teachers themselves.

Literature points out that teachers who are to participate in a reading intervention programme ought to be well trained and equipped with instructional strategies that can support children to improve their reading in particular reading comprehension (Torgesen 2005; Wren 2002). In this study, teachers reported that they lacked prior training in strategies that could assist them to teach reading comprehension to children in both their native language and English. They also expressed that their children experienced reading comprehension difficulties. However, they could not

establish the magnitude of these difficulties. Therefore, it was likely that teachers' instruction impeded children's reading comprehension.

Table 6.5 New insights

Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children		
Sub-theme	Description	Interpretive discussion
1.3 Teachers' fears of teaching in the native language to bilingual children.	Teachers expressed fears of uncertainty in regard to strategies and insufficient training in native language instruction.	Teachers' participation in the balanced reading instruction programme resolved their fears for the native language instruction.
Theme 3: Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language and English is important to bilingual children		
3.1Realisation of their knowledge to teach reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children.	Teachers reported that their participation in discussion and demonstrations sessions as well as explicit instruction of reading comprehension empowered them with strategies for teaching reading comprehension.	In this study, teachers' views indicated that they had knowledge gaps in their instruction of reading in comprehension in both languages to bilingual children.
3.3 Positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension in both languages to bilingual children.	Teachers felt happy and confident that they could firmly teach reading comprehension to bilingual children. They also expressed that participation in the programme instilled the love and spirit of teaching reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English to bilingual children.	Participation in the balanced reading instruction programme equipped them with strategies that improved their instruction of reading comprehension firstly in Runyankole and then in English.

New insights into instruction of reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children were derived from teachers' participation in discussion and demonstration sessions, reflective session as well as explicit instruction of reading comprehension during the execution of the programme. Being part of the research participants in the implementation of the balanced reading

instruction programme, the teachers were empowered with knowledge and awareness of appropriate strategies for teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children particularly in the native language. It was evident that teachers in this study utilised different strategies in their instruction after being exposed to them in the programme. These strategies included; phonics instruction, cut-out letter cards, well formulated and graded questions about stories, teacher made texts, individual reading of texts and interactive small group story book reading sessions. Consequently, teachers' instruction improved children's reading comprehension as evidenced in their activity books and assessment records.

6.5 Discussion of findings according to themes

In the next sections I discuss the themes in accordance to the exiting literature. I further expound the themes in regard to the findings of this study.

6.5.1 Theme 1: Instruction in the native language (Runyankole) is vital to bilingual children

Instruction in the native language to bilingual children in their early education enhances their understanding as well as better academic achievement in the curriculum content (Kioko, 2015; Rodriguez, 2014). In addition, it provides children with opportunities to learn basic concepts in their own language (Munhumweyi and Masuku, 2002).

It was evident from the data that teachers used the native language in their instruction to explain the meaning of words and sentences written in English to children. They indicated that the native language was used to translate words and sentences so that children could understand the content being taught through reading. This is supported by Chapele (1999) who states that the native language can be used by the teacher to translate new words or grammatical structures for children to comprehend their meaning. The data revealed that teachers freely expressed themselves in their native language

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(Runyankole) and taught with confidence reading comprehension to their primary three children while using Runyankole as the medium of instruction (5.3.1.1). This is in line with Munhuweyi and Masuku (2002) who contend that when the primary language is used as a medium of instruction, it gives children confidence to express themselves without inhibitions imposed by the mastery of the medium of instruction.

Mixing of the native language and English was a strategy teachers utilised when teaching reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. Nankindu, Kirunda and Ogavu (2015) noted that mixing of the two languages was one of the common strategies primary school teachers in Uganda used in the instruction of literacy including reading comprehension. However, the data revealed that mixing of two languages in their instruction brought confusion among their children and thus led to children's inability to comprehend. Participant A mentioned that *Okushomesa kwaitu nakwo nikuretera abaana obutashomagye* (Our teaching also makes children not to obtain reading comprehension). She further said that even the parents of their children were complaining that their children do not read.

The teachers pointed that their participation in the programme such as balanced reading instruction was of great benefit to them as they gained skills of teaching reading comprehension in Runyankole which also assisted them in their instruction of reading comprehension in English.

6.5.2 Theme 2: Teaching reading comprehension in the native language (Runyankole) to bilingual children is crucial to understanding both languages

Teachers indicated that they ably used the phonics instruction to teach the alphabet of Runyankole starting with sound recognition, followed by blending of vowel sounds with consonants to form syllables (5.3.2.1). This is supported by scholars who contend that when teaching a native language that comprises of spoken words that have multi-syllables in sound structure

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such as Spanish, teachers ought first to teach individual sounds that include vowels and consonants. Thereafter combine the vowels with consonants to form open syllables (Alison, 2016; Ford and Palacios; 2015; Correy, 2011). In the case of this study Runyankole was also a native language that had multi-syllables in its sound structure.

The data revealed that the teachers demonstrated the ability to teach children vocabulary through phonics instruction. They taught children to form words combining vowels with two letter syllables. Thereafter they taught children to form words combining vowels, two and three letter syllables. In addition, they engaged children in different activities for practice of word building such as using cut-out letter cards to form words, saying aloud the words as well as writing them in their activity books (5.3.2.2). This is in line with Alison (2016) who explains that children should be taught to build words starting with open syllable, then to two open syllables and progress to three open syllables. Correy (2011) adds that when children have been engaged in sufficient practice and are comfortable with blending of two letter sounds, they can start forming words with more letter combinations.

The teachers indicated that they ably taught reading comprehension in children's native language. This was exhibited through the interactive story reading aloud lessons that were followed by the asking of carefully graded questions (5.3.2.3). Ford and Palcios (2015) affirm that engaging children in interactive read aloud supports them to build their comprehension skills as well as expanding their vocabulary.

Teachers also indicated that they guided children to predict the events that were likely to be in the story books. Thereafter, the teachers let the children to individually read one story at a time and then engaged them in their small groups to answer questions on the story that were both oral and written (5.3.2.3). This was in accord with Katherine, Stahl and Garcia (2015) who assert that teachers ought to select an authentic text, divide it into

meaningful units and then lead a discussion through which the students establish the purpose of reading. The teacher then guides the students to generate predictions of what is to happen in the next unit. Thereafter, the teacher lets the students to read or listen to the text and finally leads a small group discussion on the text as students confirm their predictions.

The teachers said that they modelled reading aloud stories in Runyankole to children. After their modelling the children would then individually read aloud to the entire group and the teacher. Semingson, Pole and Tommerdahl (2015) suggest that teachers' modelling of reading aloud integrate different skills which are developed among children through shared reading. Such skills include; phonemic awareness, phonics, punctuation sight words and comprehension. Thus shared reading was also a means through the teachers obtained feedback on the skills developed by children and those that required further modelling. The teachers then guided the children to apply these skills when teaching reading comprehension in English.

6.5.3 Theme 3: Teachers' empowerment in teaching reading comprehension in both the native language (Runyankole) and English is important to bilingual children

Data revealed that involvement of teachers in the balanced reading instruction programme empowered them with strategies that improved their instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. The teachers indicated that they ably formulated different levels of questions which they used in their interactive story book reading lessons to enhance children's reading comprehension. This is supported by Breiseth (2010) who affirms that teachers should ask carefully graded questions (in terms of literal, interpretive and applied levels) after students' reading in order to check on their comprehension.

The teachers showed the ability to use pictures and illustrations to prompt children to predict the events in the story books as well as supporting them

to comprehend what they read. MacCarthy (2013) affirms that use of illustrations and clear contexts of conversation in the teaching of first language, in the case of this study Runyankole, support children's comprehension of what is read and heard. Breiseth (2010) adds that pictures and illustrations not only enhances students' comprehension but also build their background knowledge.

It was evident from the data that teachers not only obtained strategies but also improved their instruction and attitude towards reading comprehension of bilingual children firstly in the Runyankole and then in English. The teachers also acknowledged that they attained skills to teach reading comprehension in English in English as well as Runyankole in Runyankole and not mixing the two languages. Participant C mentioned that *"We have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading comprehension which is good."* Participant A added *"I feel confident that I can firmly teach reading comprehension to children even if I am transferred to another school. This programme has instilled in us the love and spirit of teaching reading comprehension…"*

6.6 Discussion of findings in terms of research questions

In this section, the research questions that framed my study are answered with reference to the reviewed literature and conceptual framework. Firstly, I present the discussion of my findings with regard to each of the sub-questions and thereafter answer the main question.

6.6.1 Sub-question one:

Which components inform the design of the balanced reading instruction programme teachers can use in the instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children?

I together with the participating teachers discussed their instruction and children's difficulties with regard to reading comprehension. The analysis of

the outcomes of the discussion sessions enabled us to identify teachers' instruction gaps as one of the reasons for children's reading comprehension difficulties in this study. Teachers' instruction gaps in relation to phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension were the basis on which the components of the balanced reading instruction programme were considered during its design and implementation. In this programme, key strategies were utilised by teachers as they explicitly taught reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. The key strategies included; phonics instruction, small group instruction, interactive reading aloud, teachers' modelling of reading and asking carefully graded questions after children's individual reading of the texts and stories.

The programme facilitated teachers to obtain new strategies of teaching reading comprehension in both the native language and English through their participation in professional development sessions, demonstration sessions and explicit instruction in the classroom context. The programme encouraged teachers to engage children in different activities and individual independent reading of different story books for practice. The teachers also carried out ongoing assessment as feedback to review or enhance their strategies for instruction as well as children's progress.

The components and strategies that were derived from the literature and set out in section 2.4 and 2.5; chapter two are indicated in this section to have been successfully incorporated in the devised programme. With regard to the strategies incorporated in the balanced reading instruction programme, the study found out these strategies equipped teachers with knowledge and skills to effectively teach reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English to primary three bilingual children.

6.6.2 Sub-question two:

How do teachers respond to the balanced reading instruction programme?

The study revealed that the balanced reading instruction programme improved teachers' instruction of reading comprehension as illustrated by the participants' responses. Participant A said;

"… *At the beginning of this project, I had a lot of fear that the strategies we trained in this programme were not similar to those we have been using to teach reading comprehension. So I saw these strategies new to me. Before, we were not teaching children sounds or even blending sounds to form syllables or words. But now we can teach them well."*

Participant B added that "… Before the programme, we were teaching while mixing sentences and words. We would begin with teaching sentences to children, yet they did not know the sounds. But now I have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading that is from sounds to syllables, then to words and sentences and finally to reading stories and texts."

The above responses suggest that the strategies teachers used before the programme were not appropriate in the instruction of reading comprehension. Thus teachers' participation in the programme enabled them to obtain new strategies that enhanced reading comprehension. For instance they demonstrated the use of phonics instruction to teach sounds, blending them to form syllables and words to children as a prerequisite of reading comprehension. While teaching the sounds, the teachers cited the use of sounds made by different animals and people in their surroundings, songs and games to reinforce the mastery of sound-letter recognition among children. In addition, they used self-made cut-out letter cards for vowels, two and three letter syllables to demonstrate word building to children.

It was evident from the findings that teachers formulated different levels of questions which they used during their interactive story book reading lessons. They cited that they asked these questions before reading, during and after children's reading of the stories. Formulating different levels of questions enabled them to teach children to learn to read with

understanding. Breiseth (2010) affirms that asking carefully graded questions helps teachers to check on children's comprehension. The questions assisted teachers to not only enhance reading comprehension but also to encourage their children to respond in full sentences both orally and written. Consequently teachers' instruction of reading comprehension was improved first in Runyankole and then in English.

6.6.3 Sub-question three:

What effect does the balanced reading instruction programme have on children' reading comprehension in both the native language and English?

The study revealed that children as indirect participants attained reading comprehension strategies from teachers' instruction of reading comprehension in both Runyankole and English during the implementation of the balanced reading instruction programme. In the interactive story book reading sessions, teachers used pictures and illustrations in the stories to prompt children to predict the happenings. After reading the story, teachers asked questions about the story that supported children to analyse and comprehend what they read. In so doing, strategies such as prediction, use of background knowledge and comprehension were inculcated among children.

Teachers cited that engaging children in different sound recognition and word building activities encouraged children to understand what they read. For instance Participant C said "… *I did not know how to teach sounds. I have taught sounds and now children know how to read and write. Before the programme, my children were not able to read and answer questions on a given text both orally and written, But now my children can read, understand the text and answer the questions in written form by themselves."* Participant C also reported that her children could recognise different sounds and read words and sentences by themselves. This implies

that children attained sound-letter relationship which is an essence of reading comprehension.

In my lesson observations, I also noticed that teachers modelled reading aloud stories in both Runyankole and English. Thereafter children would read aloud to the entire group and the teacher. The teacher then would reinforce good reading. This was done to inculcate fluency as strategy in reading among children.

6.6.4 Main question:

How does the balanced reading instruction programme assist teachers to provide support for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children in the native language and English?

The research question aimed at revealing strategies attained by teachers as a result of their participation in the programme in order to address reading comprehension challenges of primary three bilingual children. In this study, teachers were involved in the demonstration sessions, focus group interview discussions as well as participants in the research project. Through these different sessions, teachers attained knowledge and practice of the different strategies they utilised in their explicit teaching of reading comprehension. I together with the participating teachers conducted reflective sessions in which we reflected on teachers' instruction and identified gaps that needed collective action for further planning and practice. As a result, teachers demonstrated the ability and confidence to use the strategies in the teaching of reading comprehension in Runyankole and English. For instance Participant C said "…*We have learnt the systematic way of teaching reading comprehension which is good."*

The findings also revealed that the strategies teachers attained through the programme improved children's reading comprehension in the native language which enabled them to learn English much easier. For instance participant C said "…*Teaching sounds first in Runyankole has helped our*

children to learn to read with understanding the texts written in both Runyankole and English. This is because Runyankole letter sounds are similar to those of English. So learning of English sounds has become much easier to our children under this programme."

During the focus group interview discussions, the teachers responded that their children recognised sounds, blended them into words, read sentences and comprehended different texts as well as answering questions about them in written form. In the analysis of children's continuous assessment test results during the evaluation phase of the programme, I together with teacher participants pointed out that twenty-eight out of forty (70%) children comprehended the texts and correctly answered questions on them while twelve (30%) children read and wrote words and sentences. Yet in the first assessment before the programme only seventeen out of forty (42.5%) children read words and sentences while twenty three (57.5%) children could neither recognise sounds nor read words and sentences.

Thus, the results of the study indicate that active participation in the programme facilitated teachers to improve their instruction of reading comprehension first in Runyankole and then in English. Consequently children's challenges were addressed and hence their reading comprehension improved in both Runyankole and English.

6.7 Reflections on the theoretical and conceptual framework

The conceptual framework explained in chapter two was critical in understanding how the balanced reading instruction programme enabled teachers to support bilingual children to improve their reading comprehension. The conceptual framework of this study was developed from two major theories namely; Cummins' (1984) linguistic interdependence hypothesis and Rappaport (1984) empowerment theory (Figure 2.2).

The teachers were the main participants at the focal point of the theories while bilingual children were the indirect participants since they were the recipients of the outcomes of teachers' instruction during the programme.

This study found out teachers' instruction had gaps with regard to teaching reading comprehension in children's native language (Runyankole) and English. It was evident from teachers' responses that mixing Runyankole and English was the strategy they used when teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children. This strategy confused children and thus hindered them to comprehend what they read. They also noted that their instruction encouraged rote learning amongst their children. The findings indicated that children of this study (indirect participants) experienced challenges in sound-letter relationship; word, sentence and text comprehension. Thus it became clear that participation in the balanced reading instruction programme empowered teachers with strategies to improve their instruction as well as children's reading comprehension.

At the beginning, this study assumed that primary three children had received sufficient reading instruction in their native language that would be a basis on which I the researcher in collaboration with teacher participants could use for teaching reading comprehension in English. On the contrary, the findings from teachers' responses and the baseline assessment test of children showed that the majority of children experienced comprehension challenges in their native language and yet it was used as a medium of instruction in the lower primary classes. In addition, teachers expressed their fears and lack of prior training in the teaching of reading comprehension in children's native language. Thus the study firstly focused on empowering teachers with strategies for teaching reading comprehension in the native language which they later applied in the teaching of reading comprehension in English.

In summary, the findings indicate that teachers' involvement in the balanced reading instruction programme empowered them with strategies that

improved their instruction in both Runyankole and English. It was evident that the programme inculcated among teachers confidence and love of teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children. The results of the study clearly brought out that teachers' intensive and explicit instruction aided by pictures, illustrations, cut-out letter cards, self-made texts, story books and carefully graded questions integrated with ongoing assessment, supported bilingual children to improve their reading comprehension in both their native language and English.

6.8 My contribution to knowledge

This study focused on two aspects namely teachers' instruction and reading comprehension challenges of bilingual children. Thus it contributes to the literature by providing research-based evidence on teachers' successful instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children.

Instruction in the native language supports bilingual children to learn basic concepts in their language as well as enhancing their understanding and academic success (Kioko, 2015; Rodriguez, 2014; Munhuweyi and Masuku, 2002). Cummins (2000) adds that instructional support in children's native language improves their cognitive linguistic and academic growth. Regardless of its advantages, this study revealed that teachers lacked appropriate strategies for enhancing comprehension of primary three bilingual children more especially in their native language. This study therefore makes a contribution to teachers' instruction of reading comprehension in the native language to countries such as Uganda whose emphasis is placed on using the native language as a medium of instruction in children's primary education. It also makes a contribution to teachers' instruction with regard to strategies they could utilise to address children's reading comprehension challenges first in the native language and then in English.

The results of the study showed that the balanced reading instruction programme empowered teachers with strategies for teaching reading comprehension first in the native language and then in English. They were encouraged to use phonics instruction as a strategy specifically for teaching reading comprehension in native languages whose sound structures comprise multi-syllables (Alison, 2016) including Runyankole for this study context. In addition, this study indicates that teachers explicitly taught reading comprehension using other strategies such as teacher-child interactive story book reading sessions, pictures and illustrations as well as asking different levels of questions on texts to support children's reading comprehension in the native language and English as well.

Improvisation of cut-out letter cards, utilisation of sounds from their surroundings and self-made texts assisted teachers to engage children in different activities for practice which enabled them to improve their comprehension at word, sentence and text levels.

The study indicated that participating teachers had fears in teaching reading comprehension in the native language due to lack of prior training. Thus participation in the programme equipped them with appropriate strategies for not only teaching reading comprehension in Runyankole but also in English. Consequently, the teachers attained confidence and positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children.

This research may contribute positively to improving teachers' instruction of reading comprehension in Runyankole as the first priority and then in English. The findings may also serve as an indicator for initiation of professional development sessions in direct instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children to practicing teachers in primary schools of Uganda.

6.9 Reflections on the balanced reading instruction programme

The intent of the balanced reading instruction programme was to empower teachers with strategies to improve their instruction as well as addressing children's reading comprehension challenges in both their native language and English. In this regard reading comprehension was to be addressed in terms of equipping children with comprehension strategies when reading a given text in either Runyankole or English.

On the contrary, at the inception of the programme the teachers made it clear through the focus group interview discussions that their bilingual children could read orally words and sentences but could not comprehend what they read. They further indicated that when their children are asked to spell the words in English, they mixed the letters of English and Runyankole. The baseline assessment results also showed that a large number of children experienced challenges in sound-letter relationship and blending, word and sentence comprehension. Teachers' responses and test results pointed out that children's reading comprehension challenges originated from lack of knowledge in sound letter recognition in both languages. As a result the programme first addressed the challenge of sound-letter relationship, blending of sounds and vocabulary building before embarking on the instruction of reading comprehension.

Further, the programme anticipated that teacher participants had sufficient knowledge and skills in teaching reading in particular reading comprehension through the experience they had in teaching children of lower primary classes. However, through the focus group interview session, it was found that the teacher participants had instruction gaps with regard to sound-letter relationship and mixing English and Runyankole in their instruction of reading comprehension. Their responses also pointed to their instruction as the cause of their children's reading comprehension challenges.

To address these unanticipated challenges, in collaboration teacher participants we discussed and decided first to concentrate on the instruction of sound-letter relationship, alphabet principle, word building and comprehension and sentence comprehension which are prerequisites of reading comprehension. Thereafter explicit instruction of comprehension was conducted. In addition we decided that the participating teachers get involved in interactive professional development sessions in order for them to attain knowledge and strategies for teaching sound letter recognition and blending, word, sentence and text comprehension as stipulated in the programme. We decided that explicit instruction of reading comprehension be first done in Runyankole and then in English.

The teachers expressed the challenge of insufficient reading materials such as reading cards and story books to support their instruction. To address this challenge the researcher in collaboration with teacher participants made cut-out letter cards from strips of cardboard boxes. They also composed self-written comprehension texts. In partnership with the teachers we explored the school library and identified assorted story books for primary three in both Runyankole and English. Thereafter, the teachers carried explicit instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children beginning with sound-letter relationship, then word and sentence comprehension and finally comprehension of texts as the programme was progressively implemented.

At the end of the programme teachers as direct participants, pointed out that participation in the balanced reading instruction programme enabled them to gain confidence, better strategies and skills in teaching reading comprehension first in Runyankole and then in English. And thus they improved their instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. The children who were indirect participants attained comprehension strategies as a result of teachers' instruction. Consequently, they made improvement in their reading comprehension first in Runyankole and then in English.

6.10 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the information obtained from the teachers as a result of their participation in the balanced reading instruction programme for improving reading comprehension of primary three bilingual children. The recommendations were made in order to improve teachers' instruction in literacy, in particular reading comprehension to bilingual children in lower primary classes where the native language and English are simultaneously taught:

➤ Inclusion of equal number of lessons for explicit instruction of reading comprehension for the native language and English on the timetable of lower primary classes (primary one to three) at school level by the head teachers. The teachers' responses indicated that less time was given to reading comprehension in the native language as compared to those of English language.

➤ Teachers' professional development programmes should be initiated by Mbarara Municipality Education department with a focus on instructional strategies, explicit instruction, children's activities and assessment procedures for reading comprehension particularly the native language. These programmes will equip teachers with new strategies and knowledge for teaching reading comprehension to bilingual children.

➤ The education department to involve teachers in writing a variety of stories in the native language that could be compiled into story books in order to provide children with reading materials that enhance their comprehension.

➤ I recommend that teacher training institutions for primary teachers should include explicit instruction for teaching reading comprehension in both the native language and English in children's early years in the curriculum of Early Childhood Education. For this would cater for

teachers' lack of prior training as indicated by teachers' expressions in this study.

➢ The Ministry of education to establish a monitoring team for monitoring the implementation of the language policy in primary schools to establish its challenges and possible solutions.

➢ I recommend that research be carried out on the instruction of reading in both the native languages and English nationwide. This research would assist to identify the challenges teachers experience in the instruction of reading comprehension and point to the government to provide appropriate intervention programmes.

6.11 Further study

I suggest the following for further studies:

➢ A large scale of intervention programme for improving teachers' instruction of reading comprehension in the native language of bilingual children.

➢ A longitudinal record of the impact of the balanced reading instruction programme towards reading comprehension of the bilingual children in the school for this study.

➢ A participatory action research on the effectiveness of continuous assessment in enhancing reading comprehension in bilingual children.

6.12 Limitations of the study

This study being critical qualitative as well as participatory action research in nature; it focused on primary three teachers in one single school as the study context. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to all primary three teachers in Mbarara Municipality primary schools and all other teachers

of primary three children in other geographical contexts in Uganda. However, I described the entire research process in regard to how the balanced reading instruction programme equipped teachers with strategies to improve their instruction of reading comprehension to bilingual children. The findings offered could be applied for possible transferrable purposes (Anney, 2014; Morrow, 2005). Thus this case could be used to provide a research based programme for improving teachers' instruction with regard to reading comprehension of bilingual children.

6.13 Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the teacher participants attained knowledge and new strategies that enabled them to effectively teach reading comprehension to primary three bilingual children. The study also revealed that the strategy of mixing languages was ineffective in enhancing reading comprehension among bilingual children. Teachers' self-esteem and positive attitude towards teaching reading comprehension was pointed out in the findings specifically in the native language. Children's reading comprehension challenges were also addressed through teachers' instruction that employed strategies incorporated in the balanced reading instruction programme. This study being action-oriented and working in collaboration with teachers in one particular school offers its conclusions from the findings to be transferred to similar contexts. The findings of this study can serve as a new insight to teachers who experience challenges both in their instruction and in bilingual children towards reading comprehension.

The findings can also posit to the need for teachers' professional development programmes when teaching literacy in particular reading comprehension to bilingual children in their early years of education. Such a programme can be of great benefit to both the teachers and bilingual children.

As a researcher and part of the programme, I was happy to share my experience, knowledge and skills with teacher participants as well as working in partnership with them to make an improvement in their instruction of reading comprehension in the native language and English. It was thrilling for me to observe teachers inculcating comprehension strategies among children through the strategies of the programme. Being a participatory action research study, I gained skills in working in collaboration with people with similar profession to provide a solution to reading comprehension difficulties of bilingual children as a challenge in our practice.

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ADDENDA

Addenda is on DVDs as soft copies