

# Analysis of Instructional Strategies Teachers use to Teach Reading Comprehension to Grade 3 Learners in Selected Primary Schools of Solwezi District

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated instructional strategies teachers use to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the target language as they transitioned from learning in the local language. The main objective was to instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the target language in the primary schools of Solwezi district. A qualitative approach was used and a descriptive phenomenological research design was adopted. The sample included 5 primary schools, 8 senior teachers and 13 teachers. Data was collected using structured interview guides, classroom observation guides and document review checklists. Data was analysed thematically. The study found that teachers used strategies such as group work, pair work read and aloud and whole class to teach literacy in English. The study also found that teachers lacked understanding of how to use the instructional strategies to teach reading comprehension in grade 3 as they transitioned into learning English. The study further found that the use of systematic explicit instruction, making connections with text, teaching words in isolation, in context, graphic organisers, visual evidence, peer-assisted, translanguaging, text structure, summarising important points, scaffolding, visualizing, predicting, sandwiching, and read aloud were effective instructional strategies to teaching reading comprehension in English. The study recommended that school administrators should enhance capacity building for the teachers, as a continuous process, in all primary schools so that teachers have the competencies to handle reading comprehension lessons.

**Keywords:** Instructional strategies, Reading Comprehension, grade 3.

## INTRODUCTION

Several scholarly works have shown that primary school teachers had a critical role to teach learners in lower grades to comprehend and write what they read in English language. Darcy (2012) stated that ‘if one could read the words but did not understand what the text was conveying, reading was unsuccessful.’ Reading comprehension’s aim, therefore, is to enhance learners’ ability to understand and correctly assign meaning to symbols, figures and text rather than reading textual contents alone (Hedgcock & Ferris 2018; Mohseni et al., 2017).

Despite learners acquiring comprehension skills with less difficulty in local languages, they faced problems in attaining reading comprehension skills once teachers transitioned teaching of literacy into English Language. Public primary schools in Zambia have in a long time been recording low reading comprehension levels among learners, beginning to read in English. MOE (2014) thus, implored teachers to equip learners with skills to read for comprehension by providing opportunities for them to talk and write about what they read. Regardless of all efforts by teachers in teaching reading comprehension to learners, primary schools still showed low performance when they were transitioned at third grade, (Chitondo, 2021). The inability exhibited by most grade 3 learners to draw meaning from what is read in English, motivated this study.

MOE (2013) document which was implemented in 2014, clarified curriculum expectations, promoted reading and ensured that the learners attained skills sufficient to enable them excel and compete on a regional and international levels. It provided guidelines for teaching and learning literacy in all Zambian schools. It showed that Zambia had experienced traditional teacher directed methodologies as well as the more participatory Primary Reading Program which required adjustments. The curriculum, hence, had moved away from the Whole Language Approach to one that synthesised reading instruction based on explicit lessons in key competence areas: synthetic phonics and daily instruction that offers learners opportunities to practice reading, writing, speaking and listening in the local language. It guided the education community towards a national approach for the development of literacy skills. The document, showed weaknesses for failure to provide explicit instruction to the teaching of reading comprehension. This is consistent with the research findings of Kukano et al. (2020), which show that the curriculum was implemented hurriedly and that there was insufficient groundwork preparation in terms of teaching and learning materials.

In addition, a study by Akayombokwa and Mkandawire (2022) established that lack of knowledge by some teachers on the procedure for teaching reading comprehension and therefore, taught poorly. The study showed that some pupils had challenges reading comprehension text due to illiteracy, lack of understanding, limited fluency, a literacy, low reading culture, limited vocabulary, poor motivation, limited reading time in class against long passages, inappropriate teaching methods by the teacher and lack of learning and teaching materials. Furthermore, Olifant, Cekiso, Boakye & Madikiza (2020) in their study showed that teachers did not provide opportunity to support learners' independent comprehension strategy use. Hapompwe et al. (2021) support this viewpoint by pointing out that a significant portion of learners globally struggle to get past administrative obstacles to reading because of their low literacy levels.

It established that the teachers' inability to engage learners in reading comprehension strategies could signify the teachers' lack of knowledge of how to incorporate reading comprehension strategies as an instructional tool during reading comprehension lessons.

Another study was done by Ekeh, Jacob, Pillay & Idemudia (2023) which established that teachers' pedagogical strategy in teaching reading comprehension could not be neglected because when learners failed to comprehend text and give meaning to it, they experienced difficulties in understanding other subjects taught. The study indicated that some teachers did not understand the various strategies to optimise reading comprehension. It also revealed that teachers lacked knowledge of the different learning preferences for learners in order to plan their reading comprehension lessons. Moreover, lack of appropriate reading materials and differentiated reading exercises for slow learners hampered reading comprehension among.

In other scholarly works, Mwanza (2020) revealed that even after extending the period from one year to four years of using mother tongue, the majority of the learners' ability to read and write was very low. The study established that the length of period a mother tongue as medium of instruction before transitioning to a second language did not improve literacy levels by themselves unless other equally important factors were addressed. It pointed out that the need to change the transitioning model in which case translanguaging should be legitimised as a bridging language practice from grades 4 to 5. The study further indicated that primary school teachers needed to be equipped with skills to transition learners from grade 4 to 5 in the context of translanguaging.

Another study conducted by Mupa & Chinooneka (2015) found out that teachers did not employ a variety of teaching methods. The study revealed that teachers did not prepare a variety of media for use in the teaching and learning. Teachers' instructional materials were limited to textbooks and syllabuses and did not go beyond that. Pupils learnt in harsh and uncondusive teaching and learning environments and there was low morale among teachers. In this regard, Kukano (2020) contends that it is essential for head teachers and classroom teachers to cultivate an atmosphere that promotes a school culture of teaching and learning.. Parental support in terms of extra materials such as text books and revision' books is very low. Only a small proportion of parents guided their children on homework. They did not provide extra lessons for their children. Schools lacked adequate textbooks, revision books and resource books to extend children's knowledge. The study recommends the need for schools to employ qualified teachers who have knowledge of effective teaching.

Nyimbili & Mwanza (2021) observed that using translanguaging practices reduced challenges like the mismatch between the language of instruction and dominant learner's familiar languages that existed in the classroom. The study showed that rigidity of the language policy which was based on monolingualism throughout the learner's learning process: strict monolingual based assessment which only tested skills in the regional language and: inadequate teaching and learning materials which supported monolingual language learning, resulted into learning not taking place in the primary schools. Unlike Nyimbili & Mwanza, this study analyses the instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the English Language, it also examine teacher competency in using the strategies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reading comprehension's aim is to enhance learners' ability to understand and correctly assign meaning to symbols, figures and text rather than reading textual contents alone (Hedgcock & Ferris 2018; Mohseni et al., 2017). In spite of the learners acquiring comprehension skills, with less difficulty, when literacy is taught to them in the local language in their initial grades, they faced problems to attain literacy competences in reading comprehension once teachers transitioned teaching of literacy into the target language. The problem for lack of comprehension can be rooted in poor language competences (Nambao, 2023) and lack of teaching materials (Mwanza, 2023), therefore, this study problematised the instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension when it was introduced to learners in the target language in the third grade. The study also sought to examine teachers' competences in using the instructional strategies to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners when they got introduced to learning it in the target language in the primary schools of Solwezi district.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to analyse instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the target language in the primary schools of Solwezi District.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Objective of the study was to:

1. Analyse instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the target language in the primary schools of Solwezi district.

## **METHOD AND MATERIALS**

### **Method**

The study employed qualitative approach and adopted a descriptive research design to describe the issue at hand. The population consisted of all primary school senior teachers and all grade 3 teachers in the Solwezi urban district. A sample was composed of 5 primary schools, 8 senior teachers and 13 grade 3 teachers from within Solwezi urban public primary schools. Finally, three lesson observations were conducted in English Literacy lessons. The total sample was 21 participants.

Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample size, using homogeneous technique. The study targeted urban public primary schools in Solwezi district which had large learner population, consistent learning, with readily available teaching materials, well trained teaching and management staff, and appropriate classroom accommodations. The study used a classroom observation guide to collect data from the classroom interactions between the teachers and the learners in the selected schools. The observation guide was used to observe teachers teaching reading comprehension in the target language in grade 3 classrooms. The document review checklist was used to review the validity of the teaching materials teachers used to plan and teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners in the target language. By reviewing grade 3 syllabus, National, Literacy Framework, teachers' guide, learners' books and other materials teachers used, helped the study to determine if the implementation of the teaching process reflected programme goals.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. Theming means putting data into identifiable themes and categories after which interpretation is made easier. In this study, identical data was put in common brackets so that the understanding of what participants meant became easier. Verbatim were presented in the findings to authenticate the voices of the participants on key responses. Under ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from the gatekeepers, teachers and school authorities before involving them in the study. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, by withholding their identity and not associating them in whatever way with the information they provided, except with their permission. They were debriefed for their reactions at the end and the researcher assured the respondents that the information gathered was purely used for the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research question was answered by senior teachers and grade 3 teachers through interviews, classroom observations and document review of the materials teachers used for preparation and teaching of reading comprehension in the English. These tools were used to ensure there was adequate data triangulation in the study so that all the practices which teachers used to teach their learners were presented in this study. Each category of participants presented its own views on the topic and subsequent questions asked.

### Findings from Interviews with senior teachers

The participants were asked on the instructional strategies which were used by teachers to teach grade 3 learners, reading comprehension in the target language in the five selected schools. The participants established that grade 3 teachers did not use instructional strategies which were specific to reading comprehension as a result, literacy levels, in the target language, were very low, a situation, which compelled teachers to read for learners and translate into the local language for them to understand. Senior teacher 1 stated that:

*There are no definite instructional strategies that I can precisely point out as being used by grade 3 teachers to teach reading comprehension. I don't see teachers teaching reading comprehension component of English Literacy when I observe teachers as most learners cannot read in the target language.*

Senior teacher 2 noted that:

*In the school there were visible strategies that grade 3 teachers reflected in their planned work which included word attack, storyline reading, small group and pair work, to teach Literacy.*

Senior teacher 3 said that:

*Learning of reading comprehension at the school took place among the grade 3 learners, in the target language using whole class discussion and peers assigned to teach other peers reading which was done in groups and pairs.*

From the lesson observations conducted in the grade 3 classes, it was clear that whole class discussions were dominated by the teachers while learners passively listened. It was also established that learners were unable to guide their peers to learn how to read in the target language because they had also not acquired fluency.

Senior teacher 4 noted that:

*Teachers teach learners, at their third grade learn to read for comprehension in the target language using THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading, and Spelling Skills), class discussion, group work, demonstration and pair work.*

Senior teacher 5 said:

Grade 3 teachers had challenges to effectively use group work, as one of the reliable strategies, because of the large numbers in the classrooms. Revelations showed that among the three classes, the lowest number of learners in a grade 3 class was 138 with the highest standing at 147 learners.

Teacher 1 said:

*There are no specific strategies I can say I use to teach reading comprehension as the component of English literacy subject is not taught. The low literacy levels among grade 3 learners in the target language at the school and the large numbers of learners in the classes makes it difficult to use the target language.*

The study further found that it was not practically possible to teach reading comprehension, even when it is one of the key competences of Literacy teaching in the target language due to learners' lack of linguistic competences in the language of instruction. It was also established that English as a subject, was embedded in English Literacy, as such, teaching materials, no longer contained topics that were biased towards the teaching of the English subject, but, instead, teacher's guides and learners' books were designed in line with Literacy teaching. Teacher 3 said:

*I teach by narrating and reading stories in the target language which, I later, interpret into the local language, Kiikaonde, before asking my learners oral questions based on the read texts, in Kiikaonde. Finally, I give them an exercise which the learners write as individual work in their exercise books.*

It was also established that the teachers read stories aloud to the learners and discussed difficult words with the learners before answering the questions raised after reading the questions for the learners in Kiikaonde. It was clear that the teaching practices for listening comprehension was difficult to determine whether the strategies used could be applicable in reading comprehension lessons.

### **Findings from Lesson Observations**

From the classroom observations which were conducted in the grade 3 classes, it was established that in all the classes teachers dominated the lessons as learners lacked target language competences. Learners' activities, did not yield intended learning outcomes. The following are the transcriptions of the observed lessons:

#### **Teacher 1 School A:**

**Teacher:** It is time for English Literacy (Kiikaonde: *Pano kekimye kya kufunda literacy*).

**Learners:** Kiikaonde: *Emwane*.

**Teacher:** Mention things around you both Living and non-living, (Kiikaonde: *Tongolayi bintu bimuzhokoloka binji namwewo ne byabula*).

**Learners:** *bichi, mazubo, Bantu, myotoka, bakabwa, babwe, tilongolo, ma desk ne sukulu, houses, ma desk.* (Teacher wrote the words in English on the board).

**Teacher:** *Ok Mwauba bulongo* (English: well done). *Pano nsakutanga mubuku mumvwishe mambo nsakwipuzha mepuzho* (English: listen attentively as I read the story).

**Teacher:** who can tell us what is the story is all about? (Kiikaonde: *ng'anyi usakwitubula binakumwekana mu nsombelo yetu?*)

**Learners:** *Mutumba kidoly (Mutumba and the Doll).*

**Teacher:** what is going in the story? (*Kika kinakumwekana mujishimikila jetu?*)

**Teacher:** now be in your group, practice to read the words on the and later I will ask oral questions, (*iisambayi kya kyampanwa panruobwa kyomuji nakyu pa group*).



**Learners:** In groups, chatting and making noise.

**Teacher:** Representatives come to the front and present to the class.

**Learners:** Ba teacher *kenayuka ne byakutanga*, (teacher, I cannot read. *ba teacher lekayi namukwasheko ntanga ami* (Teacher, I don't know how to read: teacher, can I help him to read).

**Teacher:** Now answer the questions written on the board in your exercise books (Kiikaonde: *asukayi mepusho aji pa board munembe mumabuku yenu*).

### Teacher 2 School B

**Teacher:** It is time for Literacy in English, so I am going to write words for spelling on the board (Kiikaonde: *kimye kyakufunda literacy, nsakunemba byambo pa board a spelling*)

**Learners:** *Emwane*

**Teacher:** I want you to read after me the words I have written on the board: cleaning, throw, boys, grass, floor, girls, dirt, slashing, mopping (Kiikaonde: *Pano kino kimye tolayi mabuku mwasuke mepuzho onse*).

**Learners:** Read after the teacher (English: Yes sir)

**Teacher:** So let us discuss the meanings of the words, who can tell us the meaning of the first word?

**Learners:** *Ami ngesekeko ba teacher* (English: let me try teacher)

**Teacher:** Now that we have discussed the meanings of these words I want us to fill in the missing letters which I will rub in the same words on the board (Kiikaonde: *Pano nsakufuta kakyambo kamo pa kunemba kyambo kyafumapo*).

**Teacher:** So, look at the board and master the words before I rub off some letters and you will be required to fill in the missing letters in the words on the board. (Kiikaonde: *tajishayi byambo sankyange kufuta kakyambo, mino sakwimwipuzha kuwiya kulutwe nakunemba*).

**Learners:** *Emwane*, (English, Yes sir)

**Teacher:** Very good, now who can start? (Kiikaonde: *n'ganyi usakutendeka? wauba bulongo, mukwabo, ne mukwabo jikwabo?*)

**Teacher:** Very good, who else can try? (Kiikaonde: *n'ganyi usakutendeka? wauba bulongo, mukwabo, mukwabo jikwabo ng'?*)

**Learners:** *Ami ba teacher ngesekeko*, (English: Teacher, let me also try)

**Learners:** ba teacher I can write (Kiikaonde: *ami ba teacher*).

**Teacher:** Very good, now get your books and complete the words in your exercise books, (Kiikaonde: *Mwauba bulongo tolayi mabuku yenu munemba byambo mumabuku yenu*).

**Teacher:** *Twapwisha kufunda literacy, yayinga ku break*, (English: Literacy period is over, you can go out for break).

### Teacher 3 from School C:

**Teacher:** I will write a passage on the board which I will read to you. The story is about Joseph and his brothers who sold him for being a dreamer. Now pay attention as I begin to read.

(Kiikaonde: *Nsakunemba jishimikila pa board Joseph yebapoteshele kubakolojanji namabo abiloto. Pano telekayi natendeka to kutanga, mulondele bulongo*).

**Learner:** *Ba teacher, ami kengumva kizungu ne* (English: I don't understand English).

**Teacher:** *Inge mpwishe kutanga nsakulumbulula mu Kiikaonde* (English: When I finish reading in English, I will interpret the passage for you in Kiikaonde).

**Learners:** *Twasanta*, (English: Thank you)

Teacher: *Aje jishimikila jotwatanga jina kulumbulula ka?* (English: What is the story about?)

**Learner 5:** *Jinakulumbulula Joseph byobamupoteshele kubakolonjanji namambo a biloto byalotelenga.* (English: the story is about Joseph who was sold by his brothers because of his dreams).

**Teacher:** Ok, we are now going to identify and make words from /pp/ sound. I will sound the phoneme and you will pronounce after me. (Kiikaonde: *Pano tusakutongola byambo biji na kilulumo kya /pp/ kabiji nekutaanga byambo*)

**Learners:** *Ami ngesekeko ba teacher* (English: let me try teacher)

**Teacher:** I will give you some example of words where the phoneme /pp/ is heard; Joseph. Hippo, People, happy, phone, pharaoh, triumph, so read after me.

**Learner 6:** Ba teacher, in some of the words we have identified the phoneme /pp/ is not heard. (Kiikaonde: *Ami kenaumvapo kilulumo mubyambo bimobimo*).

**Teacher:** okay, you are now going to read the passage after me as a class, and pay particular attention to the sound pp in some of the words. (Kiikaonde: *telekayi byambo biji na kilulumo pp*).

**Learners:** read after the teacher.

**Teacher:** So in your groups, identify words in the passage in which you can hear the phoneme /pp/? (Kiikaonde: *Pano muma group momuji, tongolayi byambo biji nabilulumo pp*,

**Learners:** Hippo, people, pawpaw, happy

**Teacher:** Okay, get back to your desks. The books I have given you, open on page 80. Listen and follow the story as I read because I will ask you questions, after I translate the story (Kiikaonde: *bwelayi ku ma desk yenu, shinkulayi mabuku pa peji 80, mumvwe byonsakutanga jikwabo, inge mpwishe kulumbulula nsakwipuzha meepuzhyo*).

**Teacher:** Answer the questions on page 81 in your exercise books. (Kiikaonde: *Pano asukayi peepuzho aji pa peji 81*).

**Learners:** *Emwane*.

**Teacher:** Since most of you, are still writing, do the work in your spare time as homework. (Kiikaonde: *Musakupwisha mwingilo kunzubo, shinkayi mabuku, tukomboke*).

From the lessons observed, it was established that lessons which were observed were not for reading comprehension. The instructional strategies used, therefore, were not explicit to the teaching of the component of literacy in English. The findings, from the lessons observed, using the observation tool, it showed that teachers': explanation of concepts were poor, oral fluency poor as the teachers could not fluently read the texts and questions in the target language. Teacher language concentration were on using the local language rather than the language of instruction, hence, of the target language grammar use, average although the teachers

used more of Kiikaonde, articulation and effective use of instructional strategies, were poor and teachers could not explain concepts explicitly, using the target language and since they taught literacy in the local language, some key competences of Literacy like reading comprehension were left out. English, as an instructional language was brought in as a back-up language. The researcher also went round to examine learners' performances. It was clear from the learners' responses in the groups that they could not read the words and short sentences which were assigned to them. The researcher observed that most of the learners were unable to read. Teacher helped the learners to read the words and short sentences for them to present group work.

### **Findings from the Document Reviews**

The following documents; grade 3 Syllabus, National Literacy Framework, grade 3 teachers' guides, and grade 3 learners' books, schemes of work, weekly forecasts and lesson plans were reviewed to establish whether they contained instructional strategies teachers needed to use to teach reading comprehension. It was, therefore, established that:

From the analysis of the documents under review, the validity of documents in terms of outlining instructional strategies as well as guiding teachers on how to employ them to effectively teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners at third grade, showed that; the syllabus was poorly presented, teachers' guides were poor, learners' books, schemes of work, weekly forecast and learners' books and teaching materials did not suggest instructional strategies to teaching reading comprehension to learners at grade 3 in the target language. Most of the schools did not have available copies of the syllabus, teachers' guides, or NLF in some cases there were no learners' books. From questions asked and responses, it was clear that the documents did not suggest instructional strategies for the teachers to use when teaching reading comprehension.

#### **The National Literacy Framework:**

*The National Literacy Framework did not contain instructional strategies teachers needed to use to teach reading comprehension at third grade in the English Language.*

#### **The Syllabus:**

*The grade 3 syllabus content mainly, focused on listening and speaking competences, for instance, conversations, time – telling time stories, drama, poetry, occupation and objects. It was, however established that group work, pair work, whole class discussion phonics and peer assisted instructional strategies were reliable to the teaching of reading comprehension to the grade 3 learners at their transitioning stage.*

#### **Schemes, Weekly Forecast & Lesson Plans**

*The review of documents such as schemes of work, weekly forecasts and lesson plans which were prepared by teachers showed that they did not have suggested instructional strategies the teachers needed to use to teach reading comprehension in English at third grade.*

#### **Learners' Books:**

*Lacked evidence of learners learning reading comprehension using particular strategies.*

Teachers were also asked on the suitability of the common scheme of work and it was established that the schemes only contained listening and speaking Kiikaonde Literacy. It was clear that teachers used the scheme because they were obliged to follow it. The teachers were also asked on the instances when they used the English language using the strategies they mentioned. It was established that teachers did not do so since learning could not take place.



## Discussion of findings

The study found that the teachers translanguaged from Kaonde into English language so that the learners can learn from one main language. Learners were allowed to use their local languages and explain their concepts in a classroom. These findings are supported by Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) who argued that translanguaging should be used when learners are using a second language to learn in a classroom as this makes them breakthrough easily. Further, these findings are in line with Mwiinga and Mwanza (2024) who found that it was clear that majority of teachers recognized learners' multilingual backgrounds and used these strategies in order to help diverse learners to access learning. In so doing, teachers negotiated the monoglossic language policy in an attempt to make their lessons learner centric.

The findings of the study also established that English as a subject, was embedded in English Literacy, as such, teaching materials, no longer contained topics that were biased towards the teaching of the English subject, instead, teacher's guides and learners' books were designed in line with Literacy teaching. The findings are supported by The National Literacy Framework (NLF) (2013) which was developed to provide a strategy for literacy instruction. The NLF clarified the curriculum expectations, promoted reading, equipped learners with skills sufficient enough to enable learners excel and compete on a regional and international levels. The Zambian Education Literacy Guide provided guidelines for teaching and learning literacy in all Zambian schools. Results also revealed that Whole Language Approach was replaced by a synthesised reading instruction, based on explicit lessons in key competence areas like synthetic phonics and daily instruction. In so doing, learners were given opportunities to practice reading, writing, speaking and listening in the local language. From this, it can be realised that teachers needed to be availed with documents that governed the education system to help sharpen their understanding of how to go about their teaching procedures. Teachers' unfamiliarity with valid guide, as noted in the in the schools, failed to transition their learners to reading in the target language because they continued teaching Kiikaonde literacy.

Further findings of the study established that it was not practically possible to teach reading comprehension, one of the key competences of Literacy teaching, in the English language, due to learners' lack of linguistic competences in the language of instruction. These results are in tandem with Akayombokwa and Mkandawire (2022) whose results show that low performance in English reading comprehension, among Grade 8 learners in secondary schools of Lusaka District were due to lack of knowledge by some teachers on the procedure for teaching reading comprehension and therefore, taught poorly. Thus, the challenges learners faced in reading comprehension texts were due to illiteracy, lack of understanding, limited fluency, low reading culture, limited vocabulary, poor motivation, limited reading time in class against long passages, inappropriate teaching methods by the teacher and lack of learning and teaching materials. From the forgoing, it can be said that teacher deficiencies in teaching reading comprehension to learners negatively impacted on their acquisition of linguistic competences. Therefore, it prudent for the teacher to be equipped with knowledge and understanding of the classroom procedures and appropriate use of instructional strategies in teaching reading comprehension.

Findings also showed that teachers did not engage learners due to language difficulties. This supported by Olifant, Cekiso, Boakye & Madikiza (2020) who investigated classroom observations on reading comprehension instruction teacher used. The study revealed that teachers did not provide opportunity to support learners' independent comprehension strategy use. Furthermore, the study disclosed that the teachers' inability to engage learners in reading comprehension strategies could signify the teachers' lack of knowledge of how to incorporate reading comprehension strategies as an instructional tool during reading comprehension lessons.

The study established that teachers' pedagogical strategy in teaching reading comprehension could not be neglected because when learners failed to comprehend text and give meaning to it, they experienced difficulties in understanding other subjects taught. Findings, further, showed that some teachers did not understand the various strategies to optimise reading comprehension. These findings are also in tandem with Nambao and Mwanza (2023) who concluded that non-teaching of oral reading fluency in Grade 5 might be an explanation to why learners still face challenges comprehending what they read in the Zambian primary schools. It can be seen that teachers also lacked knowledge of the different learning preferences for learners in order to plan their reading comprehension lessons, lack of appropriate reading material and differentiated

reading exercises for slow learners were highlighted among the challenges that hampered reading comprehension.

It was established that teachers were not trained on how to transition; thus, learners had not broken through to the second language by grade 3. The study showed that regardless of how long a mother tongue was used as a medium of instruction before transitioning to a second language, literacy levels did not improve among learners unless other equally important factors were addressed. These findings are in line with Mwanza (2020) whose study showed that extending the period from one year to four years of using the mother tongue did not improve learners' literacy competencies in the target language when they transitioned. Mother tongue as a medium of instruction, before transitioning to a second language, did not positively affect literacy levels in the learners. It was established that literacy levels among learners improved when other equally important factors were addressed, for instance, teachers lacking in their teaching and use of learning materials and teachers lacking training on how to transition learners. From the preceding, it can be stated that equipping learners with reading comprehension competencies could be achieved through a combination of factors that held the teachers at the centre.

Other results of the study established that the syllabus lacked instructional strategies that were needed to aid teachers in effectively planning and teaching reading comprehension in the target to grade 3 learners, as they transitioned from learning literacy in the local language. Mwanza & Chuunga (2022) noted similarly a lack of literature in schools to support and inform practice. Additionally, Mupa & Chinooneka (2015) agreed with these findings when they claimed that effective teaching and learning in primary schools required equipping teachers with instructional materials which would guide and boost teaching morale. In so doing, learners were positioned in safe and conducive teaching and learning environments.

Arising from the presented discussion of findings on the instructional strategies teachers used to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners, in the English language of Solwezi District, it can be concluded that the study established the instructional strategies teachers used in their classrooms in the selected schools and revealed that the instructional strategies included group work, pair work, whole class discussions, read alouds, question and answer, and THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills). Therefore, the study concludes that instructional strategies were being employed in the classes of the five selected schools which helped some learners acquire some reading comprehension competencies in the target language.

## CONCLUSION

The study analysed the instructional strategies teachers used in their classrooms in the five selected schools to teach reading comprehension to grade 3 learners, in the target language. The findings revealed that teachers used group work, pair work, whole class discussions, read-alouds, question and answer, and THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills). Teachers continued teaching listening comprehension in Kiikaonde, in place of reading comprehension in English. The study concludes that learners did not attain reading comprehension competencies in the English language because the teachers did not follow the pedagogical practices for teaching reading comprehension in multilingual schools.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having interviewed senior teachers, grade 3 teachers, observed lessons and reviewed documents which teachers used to teach reading comprehension. This study, recommends that:

1. The teachers of grade 3 should be reoriented on the teaching of oral language so that they can help learners develop the comprehension strategies in the Zambian primary schools.
2. Provincial and district offices to desist from designing common schemes, so that teachers who handle the learners, prepare appropriately to the grade and learner abilities.
3. School administrators to enhance capacity building for the teachers, as a continuous process, in all the primary schools so that teachers have the competences to handle reading comprehension lessons.

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