



# **Influence of Whole-word Method of Teaching on the Reading-to-understand Process in Transitional Primary Class in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District**

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**Abstract:** *The goal of the study was to determine the influence of whole-word method of teaching on the reading-to-understand process in transitional primary class in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District. The study involved the use of a mixed-method design, i.e., qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Results were obtained from a sample of 62 respondents selected using stratified, simple random, and purposeful sampling techniques. Close-ended questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Results indicate a positive, statistically significant relationship between whole-word instruction and the reading to understand process in transitional classes in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District ( $r = 0.219^{**}$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The main recommendations are that textbooks (which are now accessible in most libraries) must be utilized if the reading to understand process is to be administered in a manner that complies with teacher standards. The teaching methodology does not include contemporary issues. In crowded classrooms, teachers may need to employ extra tools, such as projectors, to help pupils with their writing and reading. The utilization of additional resources in the classroom enhances learning outcomes by raising the percentage of completed written language arts assignments, independent of correctness.*

**Keywords:** Reading to understand; Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District, whole-word-method of Instruction, transitional class.

## **How to cite this work (APA):**

Mbeya, A., Katureebe, Y. & Kasiita, M. (2025). Influence of whole-word method of teaching on the reading-to-understand process in transitional primary class in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(2), 489 – 499. <https://doi.org/10.59765/bg83p>.

## **1. Introduction**

Historically, most of the teaching of language was based on imparting selected techniques for each genre that, when taken together, would allow pupils to be strategic readers, but from the 1930s on, testing various methods never seemed to win support in empirical research (Tompkins, 2021). Between 1969 and 2000, a number of "strategies" were devised for teaching pupils to employ self-guided methods for improving their reading comprehension. In 1969, Anthony Manzo designed and found empirical support for the Re Quest, or Reciprocal

Questioning Procedure, in the traditional teacher-centered approach due to its sharing of "cognitive secrets." It was the first method to convert fundamental theories such as social learning into teaching methods through the use of cognitive modeling between teachers and pupils.

Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, teaching and learning of English lessons usually consisted of pupils answering the teacher's questions, writing responses to questions of their own, or following prompts from the teacher. This detached whole-group version helped pupils individually

respond to portions of the text or content area reading and improve their writing skills (Iwai, 2018). In the last quarter of the 20th century, evidence accumulated that academic reading test methods were more successful at assessing than imparting reading to understand or giving a realistic insight. Instead of using the prior response-registering method, research studies have concluded that an effective way to teach reading to understand is to teach novice readers a bank of "practical reading strategies," or tools to interpret and analyze various categories and styles of text. Reading to understand is an important aspect a child normally does before the age of 10. That's because everything from vocabulary growth to performance across all major subjects at school is linked to reading ability (William, 2019).

Children begin acquiring the skills they need to master reading from the moment they are born. An infant as young as six months old can already distinguish between the sounds of his or her mother tongue and a foreign language, and by the age of 2, he or she has mastered enough native phonemes to regularly produce 50 or more words. Between the ages of 2 and 3, many children learn to recognize a handful of letters (Mehta, Foorman, & Branum-Martin, 2020). They may enjoy singing the alphabet song and reciting nursery rhymes, which help them develop awareness of the different sounds that make up English words. As fine motor skills advance, so does the ability to write, draw, and copy shapes, which eventually can be combined to form letters (Mehta et al., 2020).

Currently, there are three methods of teaching English language that most teachers are encouraged to apply: the phonics method, the whole word approach, and the language experience method. While the phonics method teaches children to pair sounds with letters and blend them together to master the skill of decoding, the whole-word approach teaches to read by sight and relies upon memorization via repeated exposure to the written form of a word paired with an image and an audio, while the language experience method teaches children to read words that are meaningful to them (Meredith, 2017).

Pupils with reading difficulties often experience poor comprehension due to their failure to read strategically and to spontaneously monitor their understanding while reading. On a number of occasions, these learning abilities are attributed to the ways in which reading is taught in schools (Lorraine & Anne, 2019).

### **Objective of the Study**

The study was set to assess the influence of whole-word method of teaching on the reading-to-understand process in transitional primary class in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District.

## **2. Literature Review**

The Whole Word method of literacy instruction instructs learners to recognize words as whole units without breaking them down into sounds or letter groupings. It focuses on the word as the minimum unit of meaning and therefore the essential base element of reading.

Whole-word or whole-language methods stand in direct contradiction to the phonics method. While phonics instruction emphasizes sounds as the smallest units of language to be learned and manipulated, whole language focuses on comprehension with words as the smallest units (Meredith, 2017). This movement emerged from the philosophy of holism (gestaltism), which is the theory that whole entities are more than the sum of their parts. It was first proposed by Jan Comenius in 1720, roughly 50 years after John Hart proposed phonics instruction. Practically, whole language instruction includes sight-memorization techniques, reading aloud, prioritizing finding engaging reading material, and comprehension exercises (Wambuisier, 2018).

The prerequisite skills for learning to read using whole-word programs include being able to discriminate the differences between the groups of letters that form words. Time delay is an instructional procedure that can be used to teach high-frequency sight words or other selected whole words. This approach to teaching whole words has been demonstrated as effective in research (Redhair, McCoy, Zucker, Mathur, & Caterina, 2013).

Both time delay and stimulus fading are research-based methods for teaching children to read whole words. The materials for time delay procedures are easy to create. Stimulus-fading materials require more sophisticated computer skills, namely knowing how to use a paint app or editing program to 1) superimpose words over an image and 2) fade out the image. Both time delay and stimulus fading are easy to implement once you have your materials ready. The main advantage of a time delay procedure is ease of implementation. One advantage of a stimulus fading procedure is that a child may incidentally learn new words (David & Pertson, 2019).

In this teaching method, learners are expected to look at the general appearance of words. Then, from the shape of the word's appearance, the pupil is expected to memorize the sounds that should be spoken. The goal is for learners to see each word as a little picture and associate the teacher's spoken word with the little word shapes on the page.

Various amounts of emphasis may be given to letter-sound relationships, varying from teacher to teacher. But to obediently use this method, the instructor is not expected to waste time connecting syllables with sounds. In this matter, Chinese people learn and gradually memorize their characters, although it takes a lifetime for them to master the meaning and associated sounds of

40,000 Chinese characters. This method is rarely used today because each learner eventually reaches a breakdown point beyond which new words are rarely memorized (Iwai, 2018).

Speed reading products promote this concept in an astonishing manner, sometimes exhibited on TV to the amazement of audiences. The sales pitch is that your "photographic memory" can be expanded and sharpened if you buy these speed-reading products. The host then receives sheets of typewritten text from the audience—pages never seen before. Then he focuses on each page for 3–5 seconds, mentally photographing the shape of every word on the page as well as the appearance of the entire page—a mental snapshot. He proceeds through 4 or 5 pages in this manner, tapping the table when finishes snapping each picture. Then he takes questions from the audience to demonstrate that he accurately retained the information on each page. An example question, "On page three, which nation had a positive trade balance and how much was it?" etc. After successfully answering all questions, orders are then taken with promises that you, too, can develop a photographic memory (Borowsky, Esopenko, Cummine, & Sarty, 2017).

Meanwhile, the ability of learners to memorize the visual shapes of one thousand words along with each spoken word will vary from person to person. Success beyond a thousand such words would be very hard to document. Any learner can memorize some or many words in this manner, but a breakdown occurs at some point (Borowsky, Esopenko, Cummine, & Sarty, 2017). New words will show up that aren't in the guidebooks or on

the DVD. The pupil has no basis for using the letters to "sound out" the likely pronunciation of new words. Early successes may be stunning, depending on the learner's motivation to "just keep memorizing." At system-breakdown time, the pupil can then be lectured about his or her lack of motivation, the psychological causes of their sagging energy, and the shame they ought to feel (David & Pertson, 2019).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

An experimental research design was used to conduct this study. This type of research design is a test under controlled conditions made to demonstrate a known truth, examine the validity of a hypothesis, or determine the efficiency of something previously untried. Prior to this interpretation, available studies have tried to explore much about teaching methods, the school environment, and other related factors affecting education, but the aspect of reading-to-understand still lacks adequate attention.

#### 3.2 Study population and sampling

##### Study population

The study population consisted head teachers and teachers from five primary schools.

**Table 1: sample Size for the study**

Schools	No. of Teachers	Headteachers
School A	22	1
School B	18	1
School C	9	1
School D	12	1
School E	10	1
Total	71	5

The sample size of this study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan to establish the number of schools per Sub County and teachers. The sample size for is as follows;

**Table 2: Sample Size of the Study**

School Label	Teachers	
	Total number per school	Sample size per school
<b>Schools</b>	22	19
School A	18	14
School B	9	9
School C	12	10
School D	10	10
Total	71	62

The sample size was determined according to schools. In school A, the study considered a sample of 19 teachers were considered while 14 teachers were the sample size for school B. The sample size for school C was 9 teachers, and sample size for school D was used 10 teachers and 10 teachers for school E too.

### 3.3 Sampling techniques

Stratified sampling – for categorizing study population by gender, and by professional characteristics. This sampling technique is key to the study because it is the best for selecting a sample that best represents the entire population. Its strengths are in two points; - it minimizes sample selection bias and ensures that certain segments of the population are not overrepresented or underrepresented. Purposive sampling – To include Head teachers. It is important for this study because according to Laerd, it is used to select a population whose findings can be generalized.

Simple Random sampling (SRS) – For selecting individual respondents from each stratum. As the most commonly used sampling technique, it is chosen for being free from errors in classification, it is suitable for the use of inferential statistics given the fact that this study has a quantitative part, and it is free from bias and prejudice.

### 3.4 Procedure to data collection

Following approval of the proposal, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the research committee to act as an official introduction and a proof that the study is intended for academic purposes. An acceptance letter was equally obtained from education authorities at Bugiri District to confirm that this study was conducted legally. Owing to the geographical scope Nankoma Sub County and considering the fact that it consists many primary schools, the researcher trained two research assistants in the approaches and ethical values required to help in collecting data with in a period of one month. Research assistants are further helpful in making close follow up to increase the return rate of questionnaires.

### 3.5 Data Collection Methods

In this study, the researcher used two data collection methods; survey and interviews. Using the survey

method, the researcher visited respondents in their respective primary schools to obtain authentic data for each question in primary schools in Nankoma Sub County and Bugiri District in general.

### 3.6 Data collection instruments

Prior to the nature of the study design, a questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used. A questionnaire was chosen for its practical nature; it can cover many people in a short period of time, and results can be easily quantified and presented using a software package. A questionnaire was used to obtain findings from teachers. Questionnaires have advantages over some other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. However, such standardized answers may frustrate users.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The collected data was coded and grouped thematically for easy analysis and reporting. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically with the use of SPSS and reported with the help of tables. To establish the influence of the whole-word method of teaching on reading-to-understand in primary schools, mean and standard deviation were used. The scale used to interpret results was: 1.00-1.80 is considered *strongly disagree*, 1.81-2.60 is considered *Disagree*, 2.61-3.40 denotes *Neutral* or *Not sure*, 3.41- 4.20 stand for *Agree*, and 4.21-5.00 for *Strongly Agree*.

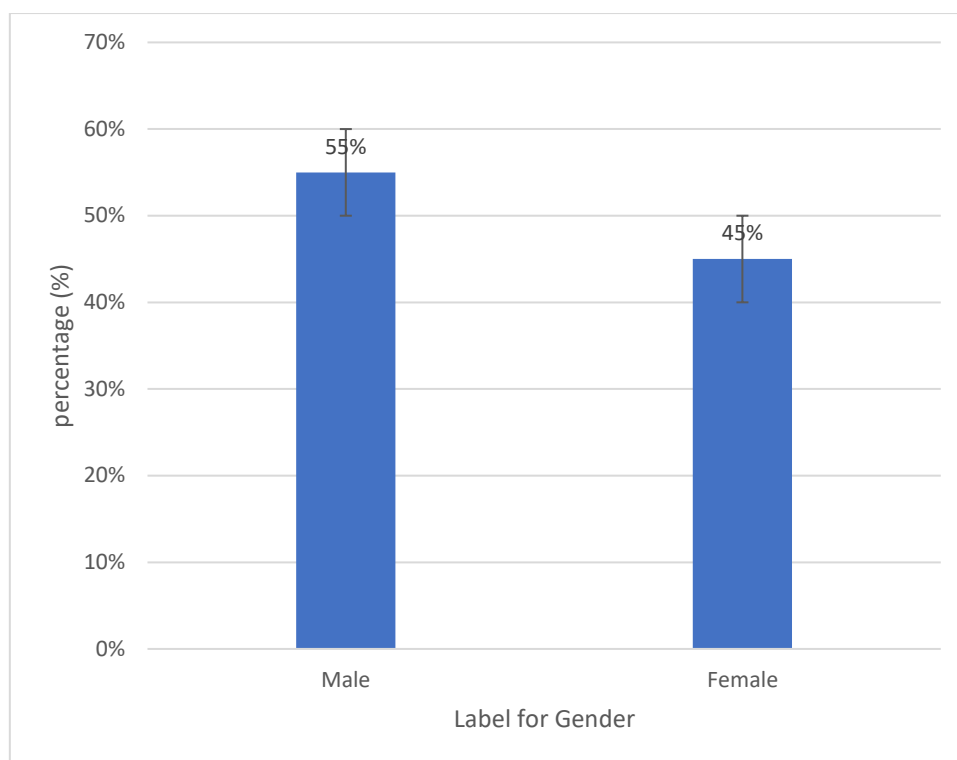
## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of Respondents

These are in terms of gender, age group and experience of teachers.

#### Gender of Respondents

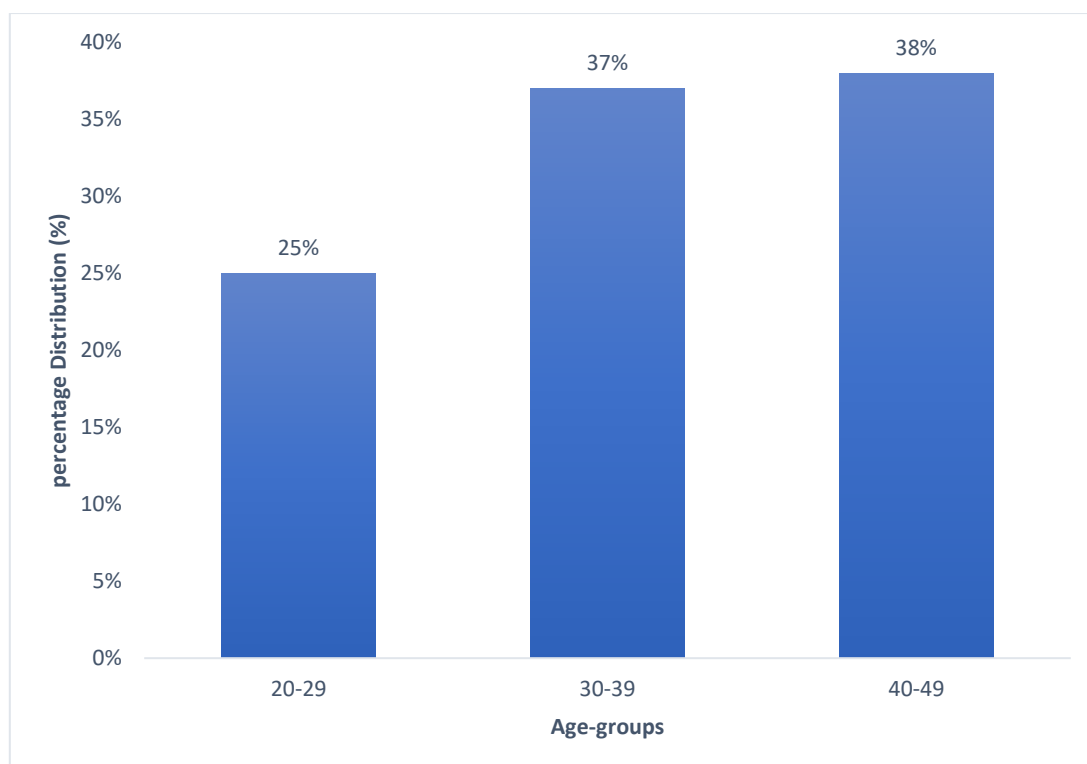
Respondents were required to choose whether they were male or female, and the results obtained were as in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Gender of Respondents**

Male respondents made up the majority, making up 55% of the sample, while female respondents made up 45% of the sample, as seen in Figure 1. As a result, the study was nearly balanced and sensitive to gender. The findings paint a picture of schools that were predominately male at the time of this study. The study's population of pupils is a mixed-gender group; hence, the gender of the teachers is crucial. When discussing personal matters that are impeding their academic success, female pupils are occasionally open with female teachers. This dynamic suggests that gender representation among

teachers could play a significant role in students' comfort levels and willingness to discuss personal issues. The study highlights the importance of having a diverse teaching staff to cater to the needs and preferences of all students. Female teachers may be more effective in addressing certain challenges faced by female students, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Overall, the findings underscore the impact of gender balance among educators in promoting student success and well-being.



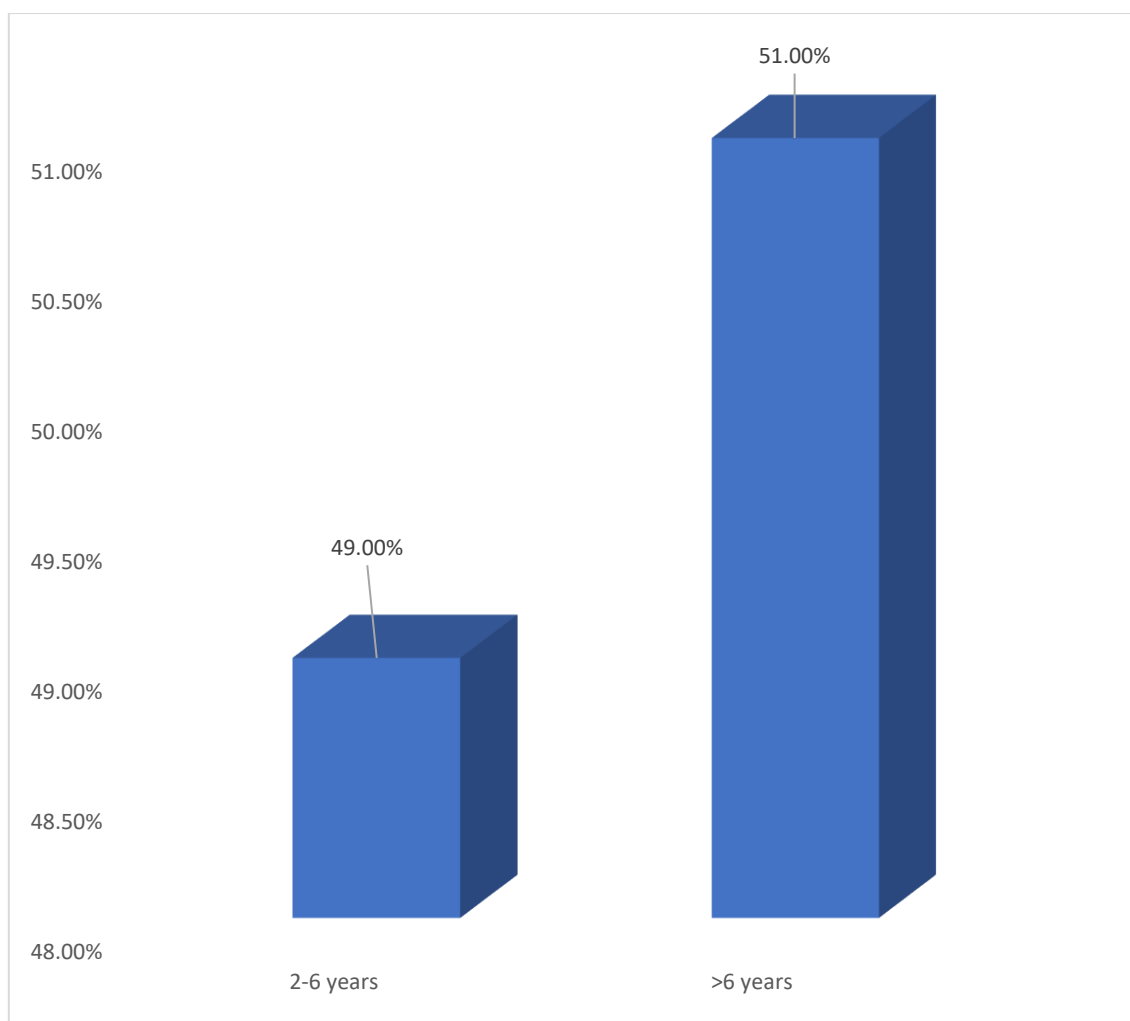
**Figure 2: Age-group of Respondents**

The age group results showed that at the time of this study, they were not in the same age bracket. Most noteworthy, 75% of the primary school teachers in Nankoma Sub County were 30 years of age or older. This was crucial to the study, especially in light of the fact that results were from adult individuals who were held to the highest standards of integrity when they reasoned. The age distribution of the primary school teachers in Nankoma Sub County indicates a level of experience and maturity that may have influenced the results of the study. With 75% of the teachers being 30 years or older, it is likely that they approached study with a level of professionalism and objectivity that is expected in

academic research. This demographic information adds credibility to the findings and suggests that the data collected is reliable and reflective of the attitudes and opinions of experienced educators in the region.

### **Working Experience**

When the researcher asked the respondents about their work experience, they gave varying answers that ranged from less than two years to more than six years, as seen below.



**Figure 3: Working Experience of Respondents**

It is simply evident from Figure 3 that 51% of the teachers in the chosen primary schools had tenures of more than six years. Given that the majority of them are at least 30 years old, this is not surprising. The study was essential since data were primarily collected from experienced teachers who had prior knowledge of how the teaching of reading has been organized in primary schools in relation to reading to learn, which improved the validity of the findings. This experience and knowledge allowed for a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes that teachers face when implementing reading programs in primary schools. By focusing on teachers with more than six years of experience, the study was able to provide valuable

insights into the long-term impact of reading instruction on student learning outcomes.

## **4.2 Whole-word method of instruction and reading to understand process in transition class**

The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of whole word instruction on reading to understand. Table 3 indicates the descriptive results for whole-word method of instruction.

**Table 3: Whole-word Method of classroom instruction**

No.	Whole-word Method of classroom instruction	N	Mean	Std Devn
1.	Whole language focuses on comprehension	62	3.71	1.07
2.	Site memorization techniques are emphasized for comprehension	62	3.92	1.09
3.	Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in order to invite positive criticism	62	3.03	0.91
4.	Pupils are taught to differentiate between groups of letters	62	2.52	1.21
5.	Picture interpretation	62	2.47	1.25
6.	Pupils are always encouraged to look at general appearance of words	62	2.64	1.08
7.	Speed reading through watching and listening to media is encouraged	62	2.57	1.07
8.	Pupils are given space to ask questions regarding reading comprehension	62	2.26	1.29
9.	Pupils become used to listening to radio programs	62	2.73	1.09
10.	Pronunciation of words is guided by teachers	62	2.45	1.27
	Average		2.83	1.13

The need to maintain an atmosphere where the only way to submit accurate information during term exams is through the comprehension of ideas is emphasized during classroom instruction to pupils. No one can write down something they do not comprehend, as is common knowledge. Teachers must specifically teach understanding for this reason. The whole-word approach is thought to influence comprehension in reading instruction since its mean score of 3.71 is higher than 2.83 and its standard deviation (1.07) is lower than 1.13. Because the distribution is normal, it is clear that whole-word instruction is a common practice in primary schools to improve comprehension. The whole-word approach facilitates a thorough comprehension of concepts in connection to the particular purpose and later inspires pupils to begin putting words together in sentences for academic success. A related study by Meredith (2017) indicates that whole-word or whole-language methods stand in direct contradiction to the phonics method. While phonics instruction emphasizes sounds as the smallest units of language to be learned and manipulated, whole language focuses on comprehension with words as the smallest units.

It's crucial to note that pupils can share even when they are not in groups by training themselves to memorize concepts as part of the whole-word approach to classroom instruction. This is especially possible when teachers are not present to fill a specific period with lessons. The results show that pupils are exposed to the possibility of memorization in order to improve reading to understand process, as the mean score of 3.92 is higher than 2.83 and the associated standard deviation (1.09) is

lower than 1.13. Therefore, primary schools should not overlook the importance of memorization during classroom instruction. To Wambuisier (2018), the gestaltism or holism philosophy contends that whole entities are superior to the sum of their parts. Around 50 years after John Hart advised that pupils should be taught to read, Jan Comenius made the first recommendation in 1720.

The need to teach pupils how to read aloud with the goal of generating constructive critique was also emphasized. This is a component of sharing, and by doing so, arranging pupils so that they can interact and exchange ideas is a tool for reading to understand process development. The important point to take up from this is that sharing ideas improves reading to understand process. The mean (3.03) is higher than 2.83, and the standard deviation (0.91) is lower than 1.13, according to the results. As a result, when pupils routinely interact with one another and read textbooks aloud and collectively, they have a chance to elicit constructive feedback, develop their reading, spelling, and diction skills, and ultimately perform better. These results are mirrored in Wambuisier (2018), revealing that first proposed by Jan Comenius in 1720, roughly 50 years after John Hart proposed phonics instruction, practically, whole language instruction includes sight-memorization techniques, reading aloud, prioritizing finding engaging reading material, and comprehension exercises.

According to the findings, primary schools in Nankoma Sub County do not frequently teach differences between groups of words as part of the whole-word technique.



The standard deviation (1.21) is more than 1.13 and less than the mean (2.52), which is less than 2.83. It follows that when conducting reading classes, teachers do not always pay attention to teaching disparities between groups of letters. This deprives pupils of its advantages, including learning how to pronounce words accurately, speaking clearly, and providing a space or platform for them to ask questions in order to understand. This contradicts Redhair et al. (2013), revealing that the prerequisite skills for learning to read using whole-word programs include being able to discriminate the differences between the groups of letters that form words. Time delay is an instructional procedure that can be used to teach high-frequency sight words or other selected whole words. This approach to teaching whole words has been demonstrated as effective in research.

The data show that the mean (2.47) is less than 2.83 and that the standard deviation (1.25), which is related to the mean, exceeds 1.13, encouraging pupils to pay attention to the general appearance of words to avoid mistakes. These results suggest that teachers don't always emphasize how important it is to understand how words normally occur. This has a big influence since, if it's disregarded, it's probable that pupils won't be able to spell certain words correctly or even string words together to form sentences. It is possible to receive subpar grades for comprehension and composition writing.

The average score (2.64) is smaller than 2.83 but still has some variability, according to the results. This suggests that the reading instruction does not expose pupils to the media. The standard deviation (1.08), which is lower than 1.13, further supports this. The results show that, in primary schools in Nankoma Sub County, pupils' reading, writing, and comprehension abilities would be highly ranked if they had enough time to connect with the media on a daily basis.

It is advantageous to allow readers to inquire about their knowledge; this is true especially when teaching and learning are taking place. Teachers that promote the use of examples to clarify concepts serve to further this. The median (2.83) is higher than the mean (2.57) in the responses, showing that pupils do not get the opportunity to debate issues in class. The standard deviation, which is 1.07 less than the mean, supports the interpretation of the data (1.13). The study found that a well-implemented inquiry technique promotes excellent test scores because

it places a major emphasis on remembering material, giving precise answers, and enhancing reading to understand process. David and Pertson (2019) found that pupils may learn new words from exposure to the word superimposed over a corresponding image prior to actually teaching the new word.

Paying attentive attention to media programs on a personal level is another technique for understanding and growing comprehension skills. It can be seen from the table above that encouraging pupils to listen to media programs is not a common practice among reading teachers because 2.73 is a tiny bit lower than 2.83. The standard deviation of 1.09, which is lower than 1.13, indicates that some pupils might occasionally view media.

Overall, pupils are exposed to the possibility of memorization in order to improve reading to understand process. Emphasizing an environment that requires understanding concepts to accurately provide information during term exams is crucial. Such behavior is a component of sharing and arranging pupils so that they can interact and exchange ideas is a tool for reading to understand process development. Primary schools in Nankoma Sub County do not teach differences between groups of words as part of the whole-word technique. Results suggest that teachers don't always emphasize how important it is to understand how words normally occur. It is definitely possible to receive subpar grades for comprehension and composition writing. Results show that in primary schools in Nankoma Sub County, pupils' reading, writing, and comprehension abilities would be highly ranked if they had enough time to connect with the media. The study found that a well-implemented inquiry technique promotes excellent test scores because it places a major emphasis on remembering material and giving precise answers. According to Lwaki (2008), various amounts of emphasis may be given to letter-sound relationships, varying from teacher to teacher. However, the instructor should not waste time connecting syllables with sounds in order to obediently use this method. Chinese people learn and gradually memorize their characters in this manner, although it takes a lifetime for them to master the meaning and associated sounds of 40,000 Chinese characters. This method is rarely used today because each learner eventually reaches a breakdown point beyond which new words are rarely memorized.

**Table 4: Relationship between classroom instruction and reading to understand program**

		reading to understand Programme
Reading to understand Programme	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	416
Whole-word instruction	Pearson Correlation	.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	416

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study's findings also show a positive, statistically significant link ( $r = 0.219^{**}$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) between whole-word instruction and the reading to understand program in upper primary schools in Nankoma Sub County, Bugiri District. This means that when implemented by teachers in upper primary schools in Nankoma Sub County of Bugiri District, all whole-word instruction items have a share of 21.9 percent to explain the reading to understand program. The whole-word instruction strategy, like phonetic instruction, has a weak relationship, indicating that it has a very tiny margin in terms of contributing to the Reading to understand program. This infers that the teachers aren't working hard enough to strengthen the use of whole-word instruction in order to advance the reading to understand program. The scores for each of the factors in Table 4 clearly reflect the above interpretation, which supports the ideas that: whole language emphasizes comprehension; site memorization techniques are emphasized for comprehension; pupils are encouraged to read aloud in order to invite constructive criticism; pupils are taught to differentiate between groups of letters; picture interpretation; pupils are always encouraged to look at the general appearance of words; and speed reading through what appears to be Teachers are urged to utilize whole-word instruction more sparingly in order to improve the reading to understand program.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The reading to understand process exhibits a positive improvement when teachers employ the method that necessitates teaching pupils letter sounds. The study's findings provide evidence that phonetic training approaches need to be improved. The reading to understand process in upper primary schools in Nankoma Sub County of Bugiri District has a statistically significant positive relationship with the question-and-answer method. There is a need to intensify efforts in this direction because of the relatively modest correlation between the two factors.

The study established that teachers faced challenges in encouraging pupils' active involvement in classroom

activities. This indicates that classroom instruction is teacher-centered, rather than interactive and collaborative. Teachers in Nankoma Sub County confront difficulties when implementing lessons that would improve the reading to understand process while also fostering students' social skills. It was reported that the majority of the teachers could not confidently train their pupils in the effectiveness of using the area's local language.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. The use of textbooks, which are already available in most of the libraries, is paramount if management of the reading to understand process is to meet teacher expectations.
2. There are no contemporary issues incorporated into the teaching process. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate debating clubs, drama, and demonstration of telephone communication to boost the level of understanding and acquisition of life skills, which is the real expectation of the reading to understand process.
3. The use of extra materials in teaching enhances learning outcomes in terms of increasing the percentage of written language arts completed regardless of accuracy, implying that in overcrowded classrooms, there is a need for teachers to apply extra materials such as projectors in order to promote writing and reading skills. On the other hand, assessment and monitoring individual feedback to learners by teachers is paramount in enhancing written language, especially where it is difficult for a teacher to monitor individual achievement.
4. In some primary schools, learners' responses to learning are not prioritized, yet the learner's voice is important to suit the teaching methods. In this case, it is recommended that while preparing lessons for teaching, learners' expectations should be incorporated. For example, teachers should always promote inquiries from learners such that learners' views become central to guiding their own learning.

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