

**PSYCHOLINGUISTICS AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE CLASSROOM AMONG
PUPILS AT ROCK VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TORORO DISTRICT, UGANDA.**

BY

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE IN
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DECLARATION

I declare that this Research report is my original work, and its contents have not partially or wholly been presented for an academic award by any person in any university or institution of high learning

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APPROVAL

This research report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervision upon appointed by Busitema University.

Signed.......... Date.....*16th September, 2020*.....

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research report to my Beloved parents Mr.Obbo Jerome and Ms. Apollo Pamela Imat For their support and encouragement towards this academic journey.Furthermore to my amazing friends and colleagues for the unity ,love and support throughout the course.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank God Almighty for His love, care and providence of good health, perseverance and determination throughout the project period. My gratitude goes to my supervisor, for her dedication, guidance, support and encouragement.

SUMMARY

This study investigates the application of psycholinguistic principles in the teaching and learning processes among pupils at Rock View Primary School in Tororo District, Uganda.

Psycholinguistics, as an interdisciplinary field combining psychology and linguistics, focuses on understanding how the human mind processes, acquires, and produces language. In the context of primary education, the application of psycholinguistic knowledge can enhance pupils' comprehension, reading, and oral communication skills, especially in multilingual settings such as Uganda, where English is used as the medium of instruction for learners whose first language is different. Language plays a central role in the cognitive and academic development of learners. However, in many Ugandan schools, the teaching of language often emphasizes content delivery over understanding how pupils mentally process and internalize language concepts. As a result, many pupils face persistent challenges in reading, comprehension, and effective communication. The current curriculum does not fully integrate psycholinguistic strategies, and most teachers have limited knowledge of how to apply them in classroom instruction. This gap in teaching methodology has contributed to low literacy levels and limited learner engagement in language-related subjects.

The purpose of this study is to examine how psycholinguistic principles can be practically incorporated into classroom instruction to improve pupils' language acquisition and overall academic performance. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the extent to which the current primary school curriculum integrates psycholinguistic principles, evaluate teachers' knowledge and competence in applying psycholinguistic strategies, and determine the impact of these strategies on pupils' reading, comprehension, and oral communication skills. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide recommendations for improving language teaching methods and curriculum design in Ugandan primary schools. The study will be guided by the following objectives: to examine the extent to which the curriculum integrates psycholinguistic principles; to determine the impact of psycholinguistic strategy application on pupils' language skills; and to propose recommendations for teacher professional development and curriculum improvement. The research questions will focus on how teachers understand and apply psycholinguistic approaches, what challenges they face in implementation, and what outcomes these strategies have on learners' performance.

The findings of this research are expected to be significant to various stakeholders. For students, it will contribute to the improvement of language learning outcomes by introducing techniques that promote better understanding and retention. For teachers, it will provide insight into effective ways of aligning instruction with pupils' cognitive and linguistic abilities. Parents will gain awareness of the role of language development in learning and how they can support it at home. For the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), the study will offer evidence-based recommendations for designing language curricula that reflect the linguistic diversity and cognitive needs of learners. Finally, the Ministry of Education will benefit through policy guidance on teacher training programs and literacy development initiatives. In conclusion, this study emphasizes that psycholinguistics is a vital tool for enhancing classroom instruction and addressing language learning challenges among primary school pupils. By exploring how teachers can integrate psycholinguistic strategies into their daily teaching practices, the study will contribute to improving literacy, comprehension, and communication skills, thus supporting the broader goals of quality education and effective learning in Uganda.

ACRONYMS

MoES – Ministry of Education and Sports

NCDC – National Curriculum Development Centre

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

SLA ECD –Early Childhood Development

PLE –Primary Leaving Examination

UNESCO –United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Second Language Acquisition

Definition of Key Terms

Psycholinguistics: The scientific study of how language is acquired, comprehended, and produced by the human mind.

Language Acquisition: The process by which humans gain the ability to perceive, produce, and use words to communicate.

Curriculum: The structured content and methods used to guide teaching and learning in schools.

Comprehension: The ability of pupils to understand spoken or written language.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the study

The word psycholinguistics comes from two words that is psychology and linguistics.

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes while linguistics is the scientific study of language. Therefore, psycholinguistics' is the interdisciplinary field studying the mental mechanisms underlying language, focusing on how humans acquire, comprehend and produce it according to scholars like Alan Garnham (1985) and Jack C. Richard (1992).

According to Kantor, J.R. (1888-1984) psycholinguistics is the relationships between language and human mind.

Noam Chomsky also refers to psycholinguistics as the study of interrelation between language factors and mental and emotional qualities.

Some say that the father of Psycholinguistics is Kantor, J.R. (1888-1984). The science of psycholinguistics began in 1936 when Kantor, J.R. A prominent psycholinguist at the time used the term psycholinguistics as a description within his book an objective psychology of Grammar. However, others name Wilhelm .M Wundt (1832-1920).

The field of psycholinguistics emerged in the mid twentieth century but interested in the relationship between language and the mind. Early psycholinguistic research was heavily influenced by Wilhelm .M Wundt who believed studying language could provide insight into the workings of the mind.

However, the rise of Behaviorism in the early to mid-twentieth century temporarily shifted focus away from mental processes. Behaviorist such as B.F Skinner preferred to study verbal behavior (observable actions and responses to linguistic stimuli) rather than the internal mechanism of language. The cognitive revolution in the mid twentieth century led in part by Noam Chomsky's critique of Behaviorism revived interest in the mental processes underlying language.

Chomsky's work emphasized the importance of linguistic competence (our internalized knowledge of language), linguistic performance (our actual use of language).

This shift spurred a new wave of psycholinguistic research that continues today.

1. Background to the Study

Language is the foundation of learning and cognitive development, particularly in primary education. How pupils acquire, process, and use language directly affects their ability to read, comprehend, and communicate effectively. Psycholinguistics, the study of the relationship between language and the human mind, offers insights into these processes and provides strategies for improving language instruction. In many Ugandan primary schools, including Rock View Primary School in Tororo District, teaching often focuses on content delivery without adequately considering how children cognitively acquire and process language. This can lead to persistent literacy and comprehension challenges, highlighting the need to explore the practical application of psycholinguistic principles in classroom.

2. Problem Statement

Pupils at Rock View Primary School continue to face challenges in reading, comprehension, and oral communication. These difficulties arise from three main gaps: the curriculum does not explicitly integrate psycholinguistic strategies; teachers have limited competence in applying language acquisition principles; and psycholinguistic approaches are rarely implemented in classroom practice. The root cause is insufficient teacher training and lack of curriculum guidance on practical language-processing strategies. Carroll (2008) stated that psycholinguistics provides insight into how learners acquire, process, and use language, yet many teachers in Ugandan classrooms lack the training to apply these insights in practical teaching. Addressing these gaps through targeted teacher training and curriculum support is expected to enhance instructional effectiveness, improve pupils' language skills, and foster better overall academic performance.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the integration of psycholinguistic principles into classroom teaching practices at Rock View Primary School. The study aims to assess the current application of psycholinguistic strategies, identify gaps in teacher competencies and curriculum design, and explore their potential to enhance pupils' language acquisition and academic performance.

4. Aim of the Study

The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of psycholinguistic strategies in improving reading, comprehension, and oral communication skills among pupils, and to determine how these strategies can be applied practically in classroom teaching.

5. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the application of psycholinguistic principles in classroom instruction and how these principles influence pupils' language learning and literacy development at Rock View Primary School. The following specified objectives guided the study:

To examine the extent to which the primary school curriculum at Rock view primary school integrates psycholinguistic principles.

To determine the impact of psycholinguistic strategy application on pupils' reading, comprehension, and oral communication skills.

To propose recommendations for curriculum enhancement and teacher professional development based on study findings

6. Research Questions

To what extent does the primary school curriculum at Rock View Primary School integrate psycholinguistic principles?

What impact does the application of psycholinguistic strategies have on pupils' reading, comprehension, and oral communication skills?

What recommendations can improve the integration of psycholinguistic strategies into curriculum and teaching practices?

Table 1: Summary of study objectives and corresponding research questions

Objectives of study	Corresponding Research Question
To examine the extent to which the primary school curriculum at Rock view primary school integrates psycholinguistic principles.	To what extent does the primary school curriculum at Rock View Primary School integrate psycholinguistic principles?
To determine the impact of psycholinguistic strategy application on pupils' reading, comprehension, and oral communication skills.	What is the level of teacher knowledge regarding psycholinguistic strategies, and how effectively are they applied in teaching?
To propose recommendations for curriculum enhancement and teacher professional development based on study findings	What recommendations can improve the integration of psycholinguistic strategies into curriculum and teaching practices?

7. Significance of the Study

This study is of great significance to a number of stakeholders as identified below; students, teachers, parents, National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Ministry of Education in terms of government affairs. Its findings are expected to have the following effect:

Students can improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The study will help identify strategies that make learning English easier, particularly for pupils whose first language is different from the language of instruction.

Parents will gain awareness of how language development and classroom practices influence their children's learning. They can support language learning at home, bridging the gap between home language and school language, and thereby enhancing their child's academic performance.

Teachers will benefit from practical guidance on applying psycholinguistic principles in teaching. They can design lessons that are aligned with pupils' cognitive and linguistic abilities, improve comprehension, and reduce learning difficulties caused by language barriers.

Findings can inform curriculum designers about language policies and effective teaching strategies for multilingual learners.

Psycholinguistic insights may guide the development of teaching materials that had better reflect the cognitive and linguistic needs of pupils.

To the Ministry of Education (Government Affairs)

The study provides evidence to improve teacher training programs, language-in-education policies, and literacy interventions in primary schools.

It can influence policy decisions regarding the balance between mother-tongue instruction and English as the medium of instruction in multilingual classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

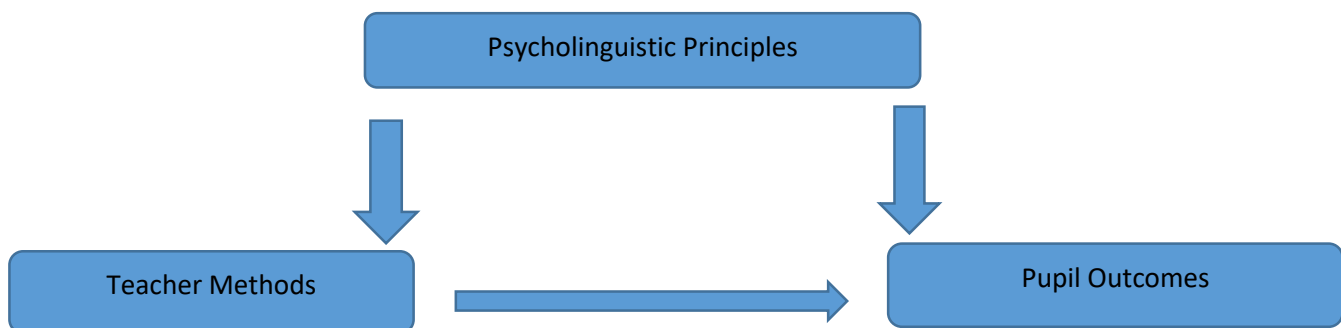
This chapter presents a review of related literature relevant to the study on psycholinguistics and its application in the classroom among pupils at Rock View Primary School in Tororo District. The review focuses on previous studies, theories, and scholarly discussions that inform the study objectives. The section discusses the concept of psycholinguistics, the integration of psycholinguistic principles in the curriculum, the impact of psycholinguistic strategies on pupils' learning, and concludes with knowledge gaps identified in the existing literature.

2. The Concept of Psycholinguistics in Education

Psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary field combining psychology and linguistics to study how humans acquire, comprehend, and produce language (Garnham, 1985; Carroll, 2008). It explores the cognitive processes that enable learners to understand and use language effectively. According to Kantor, J.R. (2016), psycholinguistics bridges the relationship between language and the human mind, focusing on memory, perception, attention, and thought processes involved in communication.

In education, psycholinguistics provides insight into how children learn and process language, which is fundamental to literacy development. Chomsky (1957) argued that learners possess innate linguistic abilities that interact with environmental factors to facilitate language acquisition. Therefore, understanding psycholinguistic processes helps teachers design instructional methods that match the mental mechanisms through which pupils learn language.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework showing interaction between psycholinguistic principles, teacher methods, and pupil outcomes



3. Integration of Psycholinguistic Principles in the Primary School Curriculum

The integration of psycholinguistics into education enables teachers to design instructional methods that reflect learners' cognitive development. According to Chomsky (1957), every child possesses an innate capacity to learn language, known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Teachers can therefore build upon this natural ability by designing lessons that stimulate thinking, problem-solving, and self-expression.

Carroll (2008) argues that psycholinguistic principles are especially vital in multilingual environments, such as Uganda, where learners' first language (L1) may differ from the language of instruction (L2). The curriculum should therefore include activities that encourage gradual transition and conceptual understanding between home and school languages.

However, many studies indicate that the Ugandan primary school curriculum focuses more on rote learning and content delivery, limiting the role of psycholinguistic

Principles in daily teaching. This lack of integration often results in poor literacy and comprehension levels among pupils.

4. The Impact of Psycholinguistic Strategies on Pupils' Reading, Comprehension, and Oral Communication

Language development involves both comprehension and production processes. Garnham (1985) explains that pupils understand language through stages involving decoding, memory storage, and conceptual interpretation.

Carroll (2008) further notes that when teachers apply psycholinguistic strategies such as repetition, meaningful context, and sentence modeling pupils demonstrate better comprehension and retention.

In reading lessons, for example, using contextual clues and phonological awareness helps pupils relate words to meaning. In oral communication, interactive questioning, storytelling, and pronunciation drills promote speech fluency.

These findings show that psycholinguistically informed instruction promotes active learning and improves literacy outcomes among pupils.

5. Teachers' Knowledge and Competence in Applying Psycholinguistic Principles

Effective implementation of psycholinguistic principles depends on teachers' understanding of how language is processed and learned. According to Kantor, J.R. (1992), teacher competence in language instruction is determined not only by linguistic knowledge but also by awareness of cognitive factors influencing learning.

Unfortunately, Carroll (2008) observes that most teachers are trained in general pedagogy but lack exposure to psycholinguistic theories. This limits their ability to diagnose language difficulties and to design lessons that address individual learner needs. Continuous professional development programs focusing on psycholinguistic awareness could therefore strengthen teachers' classroom practices.

6. Knowledge Gaps Identified in the Literature

While existing literature emphasizes the importance of psycholinguistics in language teaching, several knowledge gaps remain:

1. Limited empirical studies in Ugandan primary schools: Few studies have examined how psycholinguistic principles are practically applied in classrooms at the primary level.
2. Lack of teacher training: Most research identifies teacher incompetence in psycholinguistic approaches, but little has been done to assess how this affects pupil performance in specific contexts like Rock View Primary School.
3. Curriculum inadequacy: The Ugandan primary curriculum has not fully integrated psycholinguistic-based teaching strategies.
4. Contextual gap: Most literature reviewed, including Chomsky (1957) and Carroll (2008), focuses on Western education systems, leaving a gap in African and specifically Ugandan classroom realities.

The present study therefore seeks to bridge these gaps by exploring how psycholinguistic principles are applied in classroom instruction among pupils at Rock View Primary School.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that will be used to investigate the application of psycholinguistic principles in classroom teaching at Rock View Primary School. It describes the study area, study population, sampling criteria, research tools and instruments, validity and reliability, and limitations of the study.

1. Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore teachers' knowledge, experiences, and challenges in applying psycholinguistic strategies in classroom practice issues that are best understood through descriptive, context-rich data rather than statistical measurement alone.

2. Study Area

The study was carried out at Rock View Primary School, located in Tororo District, Eastern Uganda. The school is both day and boarding, and it serves a mixed population of pupils from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Tororo District is a multilingual community where several local languages such as Ateso, Japadhola, and Luganda are spoken, alongside English, which is the official language of instruction. This linguistic diversity makes the area suitable for studying psycholinguistic applications in the classroom, especially regarding how pupils acquire, comprehend, and use language in a multilingual setting.

The school is selected purposively because it represents a typical Ugandan primary school facing challenges in literacy and comprehension, as identified in the problem statement. The setting provides a realistic context for examining how psycholinguistic principles are integrated into curriculum delivery and teaching practices

3. Study Population

The target population consists of pupils and teachers at Rock View Primary School. Specifically, the study focuses on pupils in Primary Four to Primary Six, as these classes are at the stage where language skills such as reading comprehension and oral communication are actively developed.

The study also includes English language teachers and class teachers who are directly involved in implementing language instruction provides a holistic view of how psycholinguistic strategies are applied in classroom teaching and learning.

According to the school's enrollment records (2024), Rock View Primary School has approximately 350 pupils in upper primary and 12 teachers. The study population is therefore adequate for selecting a representative sample for both qualitative and quantitative data collection.

4. Sampling Criteria

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for both teachers and pupils.

Sampling of Teachers

Purposive sampling was employed to select teachers who teach English and literacy related subjects. This approach was chosen because such teachers possess direct experience with language instruction and could provide relevant information about psycholinguistic strategies in practice. A total of 6 teachers were selected 3 English teachers and 3 class teachers to ensure a balanced perspective. A total of 6 teachers were selected 3 English teachers and 3 class teachers to ensure a balanced perspective.

Sampling of Pupils

Purposive sampling was also used to select pupils, specifically using criterion sampling, whereby pupils in Primary Four to Primary Six were selected based on their active involvement in developing reading comprehension and oral communication skills. Class teachers assisted in identifying pupils who met this criterion. A total of 10 pupils were selected to participate in interviews and classroom observations, a number considered adequate to provide rich, detailed data within the time and resource limits of the study.

5. Research Tools and Instruments

The study will employ the following tools:

Questionnaires for teachers and pupils to collect quantitative data on awareness and use of psycholinguistic strategies.

Interview guides for the head teacher and education officers to gather qualitative insights about challenges in implementation.

Observation checklists to record how teachers apply psycholinguistic strategies during lessons.

The design of these tools will be informed by the works of Carroll (2008) and Richard (1992), who emphasize combining both behavioral observation and linguistic analysis in psycholinguistic studies.

6. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured by pre-testing the research instruments in a nearby school and having them reviewed by experts in language education before final data collection and Transferability was supported by providing a detailed description of the study context Rock View Primary School and its multilingual setting so that readers can judge the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

Dependability was maintained by using standardized questions and consistent procedures across all respondents, and by keeping clear records of the data collection process. Confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in the actual responses and observations collected, rather than researcher assumptions, and by maintaining raw data for questionnaires, interview notes, observation checklists and verification.

7. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with due regard to ethical research principles. Permission to carry out the study was first sought and obtained from the head teacher of Rock View Primary School, who authorized data collection within the school. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary; teachers and the head teacher were informed of the purpose of the research before agreeing to take part, and were free to withdraw at any point without consequence.

For pupil participants, given that they are minors, consent was sought from the school administration acting in loco parentis, and pupils were only involved through their class teachers to ensure their comfort and willingness to participate. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study; respondents were not required to disclose their names on questionnaires, and all information collected was used strictly for academic purposes. Data collected, including completed questionnaires and interview notes, was stored securely and will be destroyed after the examination process is complete. The researcher also ensured that no participant was exposed to harm, discomfort, or undue pressure during data collection.

8. Limitation of the Study

The study may face several limitations, including:

Time constraints which may limit the scope of data collection;

Limited financial resources for field visits;

Possible reluctance of some teachers or pupils to provide honest responses;

Language barriers during interviews with younger pupils.

However, the researcher will minimize these challenges by building rapport, using clear and simple language, and adhering to the planned research schedule.

7. Summary

This chapter outlines the research methods employed in the study. It describes the study area, population, sampling procedures, research instruments, trustworthiness, ethical consideration and anticipated limitations. The chosen methods ensured that reliable and meaningful data were collected to assess how psycholinguistic principles can be effectively applied in classroom teaching at Rock View Primary School.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

FIGURE 4.1 DISTRIBUTION OF CLASSROOM TIME BETWEEN TEACHER TALK AND PUPIL SPEECH.

Figure 4.1 presents the proportion of instructional time allocated to teacher-led content delivery versus pupil speech, based on classroom observation data. In the first observation group, teacher content delivery accounted for 38.06% and 39.82% of the two measured segments respectively, while pupil speech accounted for only 22.12% of instructional time. In the second observation group, teacher content delivery was even more dominant, accounting for 51.02% and 18.37% of the two segments, against 30.61% for pupil speech.

These findings indicate that teacher talk consistently occupied a larger share of classroom time than pupil speech across both observation groups, suggesting limited opportunity for active language production by pupils during lessons a pattern that aligns with [tie back to your research question literature, e.g., Carroll (2008) on the role of learner output in language acquisition.

DISTRIBUTION OF CLASSROOM TIME BETWEEN TEACHER TALK AND PUPIL SPEECH.

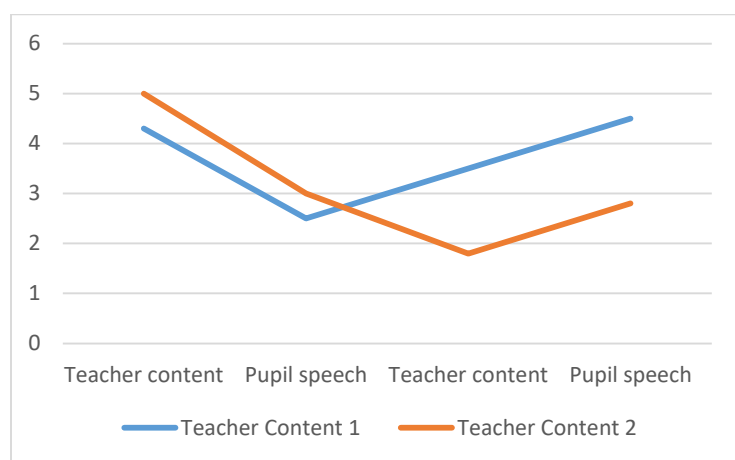


FIGURE 4.2 PRESENTS TEACHERS' SELF-RATED FAMILIARITY WITH PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STRATEGIES, BASED ON RESPONSES FROM ALL 6 SAMPLED TEACHERS.

Figure 4.2 presents teachers' self-rated familiarity with psycholinguistic strategies, based on responses from all 6 sampled teachers. Of the 6 respondents, 1 teacher (16.7%) reported no knowledge of psycholinguistic strategies, 1 teacher (16.7%) reported basic awareness, and 1

teacher (16.7%) rated themselves as competent. Two teachers (33.3%) rated themselves as advanced, while 1 teacher (16.7%) rated themselves as expert.

These results suggest that familiarity with psycholinguistic strategies varies considerably among teachers at Rock View Primary School, with the majority (66.6%) reporting at least a competent level of familiarity, while a third (33.4%) reported only basic awareness or no knowledge at all. This variation points to an uneven foundation for integrating psycholinguistic principles consistently across classrooms, and speaks directly to [your research question on teacher knowledge competence tie it in here couple of things to strengthen this before it goes in Say how you measured this was it a Likert-style question on the questionnaire "Rate your familiarity: No Knowledge / Basic Awareness / Competent / Advanced / Expert"? Say so explicitly in the text so the reader knows where the categories came from the small sample size honestly with only 6 teachers, each one represents a large share (16.7%) of the total. It's worth a brief sentence acknowledging this limits how much the percentages can be generalized.

PRESENTS TEACHERS' SELF-RATED FAMILIARITY WITH PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STRATEGIES, BASED ON RESPONSES FROM ALL 6 SAMPLED TEACHERS.

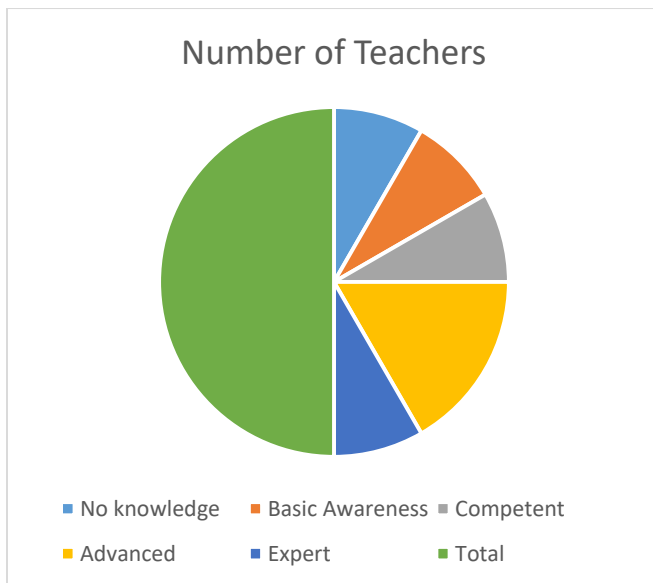


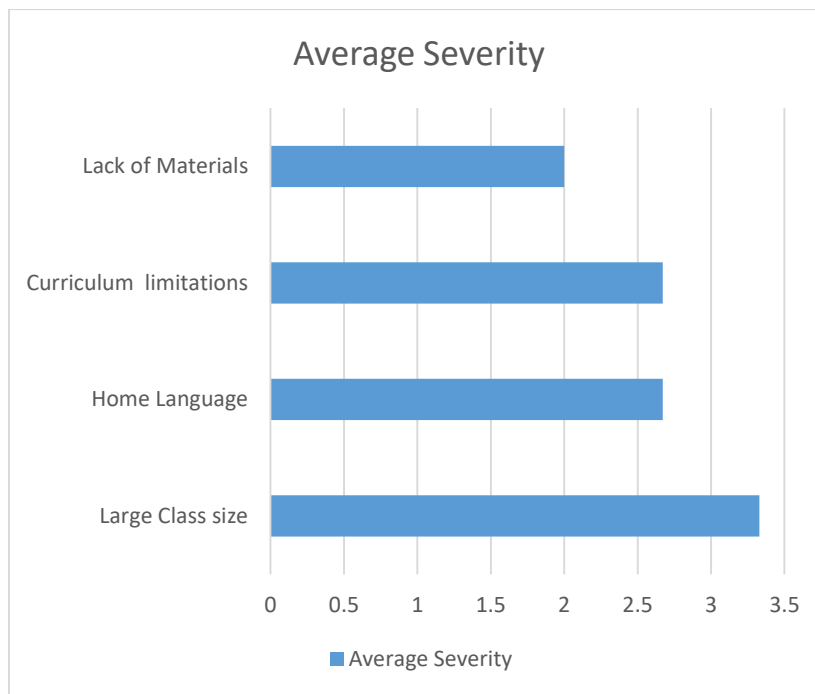
FIGURE 4.3 BAR GRAPH PRESENTS TEACHERS' SEVERITY RATINGS FOR FOUR INSTRUCTIONAL CHALLENGES

Figure 4.3 presents teachers' severity ratings for four instructional challenges, based on responses from all 6 sampled teachers using a 1–5 scale hence 1 = not a challenge, 5 = severe challenge. Large class size received the highest average severity rating ($M = 3.33$), followed by lack of

teaching materials and curriculum limitations, which were rated equally ($M = 2.67$ each). Home language interference was rated the least severe challenge on average ($M = 2.00$).

Two responses fell outside the intended 1–5 scale at rating of 7 for large class size from one teacher, and 6 for curriculum limitations from another). These were retained in the analysis as recorded but should be noted as a limitation of the data collection instrument possibly reflecting a misunderstanding of the scale by those respondents. Future administrations of this questionnaire would benefit from a clearer visual scale such as a 1–5 Likert diagram to reduce this kind of error.

PRESENTS TEACHERS' SEVERITY RATINGS FOR FOUR INSTRUCTIONAL CHALLENGES



CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 Discussion.

This study set out to examine how psycholinguistic principles are integrated into classroom teaching at Rock View Primary School, focusing on curriculum integration, teacher competence, and the challenges teachers face in applying these strategies. The findings, drawn from both quantitative classroom data and qualitative responses from the head teacher, a class teacher, and a pupil, provide a layered picture of how psycholinguistic principles are and are not currently applied in practice.

Classroom time allocation and pupil language production. Figure 4.1 revealed that teacher-led content delivery consistently occupied a greater share of instructional time than pupil speech across both observation segments, with teacher talk ranging from 38% to 52% compared to pupil speech at 22–31%. This imbalance is consistent with a broader concern in psycholinguistic theory: that active language production, not passive reception, plays a central role in how learners internalize and consolidate language structures. Chomsky's (1957) distinction between linguistic competence and performance is relevant here a pupil may possess underlying linguistic competence, but without sufficient opportunity to produce speech, that competence may not translate into observable performance. The dominance of teacher talk observed in this study suggests that current classroom practice at Rock View Primary School may be limiting the very opportunities for active language use that psycholinguistic theory identifies as important for language development.

Teacher familiarity with psycholinguistic strategies. Figure 4.2 showed considerable variation in teachers' self-rated familiarity with psycholinguistic strategies: while two-thirds of the sampled teachers rated themselves as at least competent, a third reported only basic awareness or no knowledge at all. Richards (1992) argues that effective language teaching depends not only on a teacher's linguistic knowledge but also on their awareness of the cognitive processes underlying how learners acquire language. The unevenness found in this study suggests that even where teachers are linguistically competent, gaps in psycholinguistic awareness specifically may limit their ability to apply strategies such as scaffolding, contextual cueing, or structured repetition in ways that are informed by how pupils actually process language. This finding also helps explain the head teacher's own observation, gathered through interview, that professional development for teachers has so far consisted of general "retooling workshops" rather than training specifically targeted at language acquisition or psycholinguistic theory a gap between institutional support and classroom need.

Structural challenges to implementation. Figure 4.3 identified large class size as the most severely rated challenge ($M = 3.33$ out of 5), followed by lack of teaching materials and curriculum limitations ($M = 2.67$ each), with home language interference rated least severe ($M = 2.00$). This ordering is notable: it suggests that at Rock View Primary School, the barriers to applying psycholinguistic strategies are primarily structural and resource-based rather than linguistic. This nuance matters for interpretation. Much of the psycholinguistic literature reviewed in Chapter 2, including Garnham (1985), frames challenges in language learning

primarily in cognitive or linguistic terms and how the mind processes competing language systems, for instance. However, the teachers in this study pointed instead to practical, environmental constraints: a teacher managing a large class simply has less capacity to monitor individual pupils' comprehension, regardless of their psycholinguistic knowledge. This suggests that in under-resourced settings like Rock View Primary School, structural investment (smaller classes, more materials) may be a precondition for psycholinguistic strategies to be applied effectively at all, rather than something that can be addressed through teacher training alone.

Qualitative insights from teacher and pupil responses. The open-ended responses gathered from the class teacher and pupil offer additional depth. The teacher described guiding pupils to isolate unfamiliar words and derive meaning from context, and reported using pupils' home languages, such as Ateso or Japadhola, as a bridge when English vocabulary was not understood an approach broadly consistent with contrastive and code-switching strategies discussed in the psycholinguistic literature. Notably, the same teacher identified large class size as directly limiting their ability to monitor how individual pupils were mentally processing a lesson, echoing the quantitative finding in Figure 4.3. The pupil's response, meanwhile, indicated a reliance on dictionary use and a preference for direct textbook reading over picture-based cues, alongside an acknowledgment of mentally translating from English into their home language before responding a pattern consistent with sequential bilingual processing described in the literature. While drawn from a single respondent each, these responses add contextual richness to the quantitative patterns and help illustrate, in the participants' own words, how psycholinguistic processes play out in this specific school setting.

Answering the research questions. Taken together, these findings suggest that psycholinguistic principles are only partially integrated into curriculum and teaching practice at Rock View Primary School (RQ1): teachers apply some intuitive strategies, such as contextual vocabulary teaching, but formal psycholinguistic training is limited, and classroom time allocation does not strongly favor active pupil language production. On the question of impact on pupils' reading, comprehension, and oral communication (RQ2), the evidence gathered remains preliminary and largely self-reported rather than performance-based, indicating a need for more direct measurement of pupil outcomes in future work. Regarding recommendations for improvement (RQ3), the findings point toward two priorities: structural investment to reduce class size and material shortages, and more targeted teacher professional development specifically in psycholinguistic strategies, rather than generic training.

It should be acknowledged that these findings are based on a limited sample, particularly for the qualitative components, and should be interpreted as indicative rather than generalizable to all Ugandan primary schools.

8. Qualitative Findings from Interviews and Open-Ended Responses

The interview with the Head Teacher provided information about teachers' professional development and the extent to which psycholinguistic principles are incorporated into teaching. The Head Teacher reported that teachers had continued to receive professional development through retooling workshops. However, the training received since 2023 had not specifically focused on psycholinguistics, language acquisition theory, or related principles. This suggests

that although teachers receive general professional support, they may have limited formal exposure to the specific psycholinguistic knowledge relevant to language teaching.

Teachers' open-ended responses provided evidence of how psycholinguistic principles are applied during classroom instruction. When asked how they help pupils understand the meanings of unfamiliar words, teachers reported using strategies such as breaking words down into smaller or familiar parts, explaining words in simpler language, providing examples, and relating new vocabulary to situations that pupils understand. These practices help learners connect new linguistic information with existing knowledge, thereby supporting vocabulary development and comprehension.

Pupils' responses also showed several strategies they use when learning new English vocabulary. Some pupils reported using dictionaries to find the meanings of unfamiliar words. Others indicated that they encounter new words through storytelling and use the context of the story to understand their meanings. The responses further suggested that pupils sometimes translate unfamiliar English words mentally into a language they understand better. This indicates that learners may draw on their existing linguistic knowledge when processing new English vocabulary. The responses therefore provide evidence of interaction between the learners' first language and their developing English language knowledge.

5.2 Conclusion

This study sets out to examine how psycholinguistic principles are applied in classroom teaching at Rock View Primary School, Tororo District, with specific attention to curriculum integration, teacher competence, and the challenges teachers face in implementing these strategies. The findings indicate that while some psycholinguistic principles are present in classroom practice, such as teachers' informal use of contextual vocabulary teaching and home-language bridging, their application remains uneven and only partially supported by formal training or curriculum guidance.

Classroom observation data showed that teacher-led talk continues to dominate instructional time relative to pupil speech, potentially limiting opportunities for the kind of active language production that supports language acquisition. Teacher self-assessments revealed considerable variation in familiarity with psycholinguistic strategies, with a third of sampled teachers reporting only basic awareness or no knowledge at all, despite most having completed general professional development. Among the challenges teachers face, large class size emerged as the most significant barrier, followed by a lack of teaching materials and curriculum limitations, suggesting that structural and resource constraints, more than linguistic ones, currently limit the effective application of psycholinguistic strategies in this setting. Interview data from the head teacher and open-ended responses from a class teacher and pupil provided further insight, indicating that while individual teachers draw on intuitive, contextually grounded strategies, the school lacks a systematic, curriculum-embedded approach to psycholinguistic instruction.

These findings suggest that meaningfully integrating psycholinguistic principles into classroom teaching at Rock View Primary School and potentially in similar Ugandan primary schools requires more than curriculum revision alone. It calls for a combined effort: reducing structural

barriers such as class size and material shortages, while also equipping teachers with targeted, theory-informed training in psycholinguistic strategies rather than generic professional development. Addressing teacher knowledge without addressing classroom conditions, or vice versa, is unlikely to produce meaningful improvement in pupils' language acquisition outcomes.

This study contributes a context-specific account of how psycholinguistic theory intersects with the practical realities of a resource-constrained Ugandan primary school, an area that remains underrepresented in the broader psycholinguistic literature, which has traditionally focused on Western educational contexts. Given the limited sample size and the largely self-reported nature of the data, particularly regarding pupil outcomes, these findings should be treated as an exploratory contribution rather than a definitive assessment, and they point toward the value of larger-scale, outcome-focused research in this area going forward.

5.3 Recommendations

For NCDC: Revise the English curriculum to include phonological awareness and cognitive decoding strategies.

For Teachers: Adopt interactive questioning and storytelling to promote speech fluency.

For the Ministry of Education: Fund continuous professional development (CPD) programs focused on psycholinguistic awareness for rural schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Appendix A: Teacher Questionnaire

Respondent Information

Name (Optional): _____

Gender: _____

Position/Class: _____

Date: _____

School: Rock View Primary School

Section 1: Open-Ended Questions

1. When a pupil struggles to understand a sentence in English, what specific mental steps do you encourage them to take to "break down" the meaning?
2. How do you adapt your teaching speed or vocabulary to match the mental development cognitive ability of a Primary Four vs. a Primary Six pupil?
3. In what ways do you use the pupils' knowledge of their home languages like Ateso or Japadhola to help them understand English grammar or concepts?
4. Does the current curriculum provide you with specific techniques for sentence modeling or phonological awareness, or do you have to create these yourself?
5. How do large class sizes specifically limit your ability to monitor how individual pupils are mentally processing a lesson?

Section 2: Rating Scale Questions

Familiarity with psycholinguistic theories (circle one):

No Knowledge / Basic Awareness / Competent / Advanced / Expert

Rate how much each of the following challenges restricts your ability to apply psycholinguistic strategies in your classroom (by rating them with a ratio of 1 to 5):

	No Knowledge	Basic Awareness	Competent	Advanced	Expert
Large Class size					
Lack of teaching materials					
Home language interference					
Curriculum limitations					

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Head Teacher

1. What specific training has your teachers received regarding the psychology of learning or language acquisition since 2023?
2. From your observation, does the NCDC curriculum prioritize 'how' children think, or 'what' they must memorize for the PLE?
3. Have you noticed a link between a pupil's proficiency in their first language (L1) and their performance in English (L2) at this school?

Head Teacher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Classroom Observation Checklist

Instructions: Observe one full lesson. Record time allocation across two 15-minute segments, and tally the listed behaviors.

Time Allocation

	Segment 1 (0-15 min)	Segment 2 (15-30 min)
Teacher-led content delivery (min)		
Pupil speech/response (min)		

Behavior Tally

Observation Item	Frequency/Time	Remarks
Teacher repeats a core concept		
Average waiting time before moving on		
Teacher uses gesture/picture/object		

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix II: RESEARCH TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	PERIOD	MONTH
Tc identification and proposal writing	1 week	October 2025
Proposal approval and instrument design	3 weeks	October 2025
Pre testing of research instruments	4 weeks	November 2025
Data collection	12 weeks	December 2025 to February 2026
Data organization and analysis	4weeks	March 2026
Report writing	4 weeks	April 2026
Reviews and Correction	2 weeks	June 2026
Final submission and defense	up-to-date	August 2026

Appendix III: RESEARCH BUDGET

ITEM	COSTS (UGX)
Transport to and from Rock view Primary school	60,000
Printing and photocopying of questionnaires	5,000
Airtime and data for communication	15,000
Typing, printing and binding of final report	80,000
Miscellaneous expenses	35,000
Total	195,000