

Eksploing the Common Reading Difficulties in English Among Standard Six Pupils: Eksperience From Public Primary School in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study explored common reading difficulties among Standard Six pupils in public primary schools in Tanzania. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) involving 54 participants: seven (7) Head teachers, five (5) external school quality assurers, six (6) English teachers, and thirty-six (36) Standard Six pupils. Findings indicated that reading was a critical challenge among the pupils, particularly in areas such as fluency, decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. Cognitive constraints, particularly memory issues, further exacerbate these difficulties. This study recommends targeted interventions, including the use of interactive instructional strategies and enhanced teaching and learning environments, such as access to learning materials and the utilization of teaching aids, to promote reading skills and memory retention among pupils.

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1. Introduction

Reading plays a critical role in learning and academic development, comprising various components such as comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemes, and fluency (Dhakai, 2023). While closely related, the definitions vary. It can be considered as both individual conscious and unconscious thinking processes, intended to understand the expected meaning of a text (Chaima, 2019). In the educational context, reading is viewed as a fundamental skill that learners must master (Satriani, 2018). Proficient reading skills not only enhance the acquisition of a second language but also facilitate effective interaction with and understanding of curriculum materials (Cabardo, 2016; Oducado et al., 2020; Widyaningrum et al., 2020).

English proficiency is important, as it significantly enhances both academic and professional paths. It serves as a popular medium of instruction, especially at advanced levels of education (Ministry of Educational Vocation and Training [MoEVET], 2015). Mastering English enables pupils to access and enjoy global networks and knowledge, as well as academic materials. However, reading difficulties can severely hinder the benefits of English proficiency for learners, including those in standard six. A study by Karanja (2021) noted that many primary school pupils in Kenya faced difficulties when interacting with English texts, which limited their understanding of the subjects themselves. This situation highlights the need to address reading difficulties in order to fully unlock the potential of English as an effective communication and instructional tool in the classroom.

The global prevalence of reading difficulties among school-aged children is echoed, with about 10 percent of pupils exiting school without possessing sufficient reading skills (United State Agency for International Development [USAID], 2015). In the United States of America (USA), a large number of fourth and eighth-graders struggle with reading (Spencer & Wagner, 2018). This challenge is not only limited

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to the USA; many pupils in other countries, such as Uganda, Egypt, and Somalia, also struggle with poor reading skills, highlighting a serious problem in its broader contexts (Sywelem, 2015). In Tanzania, the situation is particularly bad; about 54 percent of grade three pupils cannot read (Mmasa & Anney, 2016). These statistics highlight the gaps in literacy, particularly in reading skills.

The effects of reading difficulties are serious and can destroy both academic performance and personal development (Oducado et al., 2020). Pupils who struggle with reading often lag behind in assignments, which widens gaps in comprehending and retaining learning experiences. These ongoing challenges can hinder the development of pupils' learning confidence and motivation, making it difficult for them to progress in their school learning. Reading skills are also critical for cognitive development, as difficulties may limit the development of important skills such as language acquisition, understanding, and critical thinking (Oducado et al., 2020). When pupils face difficulties with decoding words and comprehending texts, they are likely to disengage from their studies, missing out on chances to develop essential skills such as fluency and comprehension (Gedik & Akyol, 2022).

Existing study shows that cultural diversity and varying educational priorities are among the critical reasons for primary school pupils to improve their reading skills in English (Karanja, 2021). Furthermore, it is well-documented that reading difficulties can affect how well pupils do in school (W. Karanja, 2015; Martirosyan et al., 2015). Despite this knowledge, there is a lack of information regarding the specific reading difficulties encountered by Standard Six pupils in public primary schools. This study intended to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the common reading difficulties faced by Standard Six pupils in public primary schools. Understanding these challenges is vital for developing targeted interventions that can enhance their reading skills and overall academic performance. Addressing these challenges is crucial for their success in an increasingly globalized world, where English proficiency is essential. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the common reading difficulties faced by Standard Six pupils in public primary schools, which responds to the research question of what these difficulties are.

In Tanzania, the education system has a bilingual policy. Kiswahili is the primary language of instruction, particularly in public primary schools, while English is used in secondary schools (Otieno & Saiteu, 2023). Although English is taught as a subject in primary education, it becomes the primary instructional language in secondary school, underscoring the critical need for primary school pupils to develop effective reading skills in English (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2014; Otieno & Saiteu, 2023). Proficient reading skills are essential, as they enable pupils to decode and comprehend written materials, which are crucial for their overall academic performance and foster lifelong learning habits (Mihret & Joshi, 2025).

Standard Six is particularly important, as it marks a critical transition to secondary education, where English is primarily used for all subjects, except for the Kiswahili subject. Establishing reading skills at this level is important for pupils' future learning. Different initiatives have been introduced, such as teaching English from early grades and regularly reviewing the curriculum to meet the changing demands for effective English reading skills (Makiya et al., 2022; URT, 2014). Despite these measures, reading remains a significant challenge for pupils, underscoring the need to address these challenges and enhance effective reading abilities.

This study was grounded in Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory (1896-1934). This framework is commonly used to understand children's learning and understanding. Vygotsky proposed that children gain knowledge through interactions with those around them within their cultural context. The theory highlights three key assumptions of human cognitive development: sociocultural, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding (Hameed & Corresponding, 2016). These underlying assumptions suggest that interaction, scaffolding, and cultural tools enhance cognitive development and the acquisition of knowledge (Rahmatirad, 2020).

In this context, the mind is not only an internal process. The interactions among individuals, their environment, and social activities influence performance and mental processes (Hameed & Corresponding, 2016). The concept of tools, both physical and symbolic, is important; for example, books are resources that children use to acquire knowledge (Hameed & Corresponding, 2016). Therefore, it is essential for schools to provide pupils with adequate and relevant reading materials to help them develop their reading skills.

The ZPD is an important concept that defines the gap between what a child can perform independently and what they cannot accomplish without assistance from a more knowledgeable individual (Anwar et al., 2024). Teachers can use ZPD to develop effective, tailored strategies and resources to help pupils address reading difficulties. Interactive strategies, such as pupils reading aloud together, are effective ways to help them develop fluent reading skills. Understanding ZPD helps suggest specific support pupils need to overcome reading difficulties. Furthermore, the concept of the community of practice highlights the positive impact of collaboration on reading skills. Interactive learning environments, with strategies such as

group reading, accessible reading materials, and support, significantly enhance the development of reading skills (Nicolini et al., 2022).

2. Method

2.1 Research approach and design

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design. The approach allowed the researcher to explore and understand the phenomena through the experiences and perceptions of participants within their natural settings. Through this lived experience, the researchers gained a deeper insight into the study's context, which facilitated a more meaningful interpretation of the findings. To avoid bias during data interpretation, the researchers set aside their own preconceptions and biases to fully engage with participants' perspectives about reading difficulties among standard six pupils.

The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to provide a comprehensive description of participants' perceptions, experiences, and opinions regarding phenomena under study. Participants were encouraged to seek clarification on any aspects they did not understand. The approach enhanced the collection of rich and detailed data regarding the phenomenon under study. Since the primary aim of the current study was to explore, rather than quantify, the prevalence of English reading difficulties among standard six pupils, a mixed-methods research approach was not considered.

2.2 Study Location

The study was conducted in Kongwa District, which was selected based on its consistently poor performance in English from 2022 to 2024. For example, in the 2024 Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), only 37.4 percent of the pupils in Kongwa passed the English exam, compared to 58.6 percent in the neighboring Bahi District. In 2023, the pass rate in Kongwa was 29.8%, while Bahi had a rate of 53.7%. The trend continued in 2022, with only 22.4 percent of pupils in Kongwa passing, versus 31.3 percent in Bahi. Given that reading skills are a critical component of the English examination, it is essential to explore the reading difficulties pupils encounter in English.

2.3 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants, including English teachers (ETs), Head teachers (HTs), external school quality assurers (ESQAs), and Standard Six pupils. English teachers, Head teachers, and pupils were selected from the seven primary schools with the lowest English performance, based on their results in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) over three consecutive years, from 2022 to 2024. In total, the study comprised 54 participants: 6 English teachers, 7 head teachers, 5 external school quality assessors, and 36 Standard Six pupils. English teachers were selected for their direct responsibilities and experience in implementing the English curriculum, making them important sources of insight into the reading difficulties encountered by Standard Six pupils. Head teachers were considered based on their administrative duties and their role in supervising and guiding teachers to enhance the effective teaching and learning process in the classroom context. Their position provided them with rich and detailed information about the common reading difficulties among pupils. External school quality assurers (ESQAs) were considered due to their important roles in monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning process, providing professional support to teachers, and inspecting classroom teaching and learning practices. Their expertise was expected to contribute relevant insights on the phenomena being investigated. Pupils were selected as key participants since they are the ones directly facing reading challenges. Their perspectives, experiences, and opinions were crucial for understanding the reading difficulties they faced in English.

2.4 Methods of Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were used with English teachers (ET), Head teachers (HT), and external school quality assurers (ESQA) using a prepared interview guide. The interview guides were prepared by the researcher in accordance with the study's objectives. Each session lasted between 30 and 50 minutes, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' insights and experiences regarding reading difficulties among standard-six pupils. For Standard Six pupils, data were gathered through FGDs, where each discussion involved 6 to 7 participants, lasting one and a half to two hours, discussing common reading difficulties among Standard Six pupils. To facilitate clear communication and ensure that participants could confidently express their experiences, the researcher made sure that all questions were translated into Kiswahili. Data was recorded using a voice recorder, supplemented by written notes. During the discussions, some participants occasionally deviated from the topic. To maintain the focus, the researcher restated the question and guided the conversation back to the main topic. This approach enabled clarification and deepened understanding of the participants' insights regarding the topic. The interview setting was carefully arranged to ensure comfort, with attention to seating and ventilation, creating a conducive environment for

dialogue. These methods enabled participants to freely share their experiences, thoughts, and understanding of the challenges associated with reading difficulties in English, enriching the study's findings.

2.5 Data Analysis

The thematic analysis approach, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed through six steps. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by repeatedly listening to recorded interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) until they clearly understood the content. These recordings were transcribed/converted from Kiswahili to English, followed by data cleaning to ensure completeness and alignment with the study's research questions. In the second step, the researcher developed initial codes by identifying and color-coding important features to the research questions. The third step involved searching/developing themes by grouping related codes into broader themes that reflected the main ideas in the data. Fourth, the researchers carefully reviewed these themes to ensure they accurately represented the data, merging those with limited supporting data. In the fifth step, clear definitions and names were developed for each theme, enhancing clarity and focus. Finally, the researchers wrote a comprehensive report that discussed the findings in relation to the existing literature, and the theoretical framework guided the study.

2.6 Ethical Concern

The study adhered to the principles of ethical research. Firstly, the researchers obtained ethical clearance and a research permit from the University of Dodoma. Then, the approval letter was sent to the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) of Dodoma, responsible for primary education in Tanzania. After getting approval from the RAS, the letters were forwarded to the District Executive Officer (DED), and then to the Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and Head teachers. The researchers maintained ethical standards by ensuring the confidentiality of participants and obtaining permission from the Head teachers for pupils under 18 years old, particularly those in Standard Six. Prior to recording, consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their freedom to decide whether to participate. Furthermore, the researcher took critical measures to avoid plagiarism through acknowledging sources and paraphrasing information.

2.7 Trustworthiness of the study findings

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, we adhered to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through data source triangulation, which involved comparing data from interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) to establish a consistent pattern and validate the findings. Furthermore, to enhance credibility, we shared interpretations with participants (member check) to confirm they accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives. Although qualitative research is not concerned with generalization, the researchers provided a detailed description of the research context to enable readers to assess how well the findings can be applied to other similar situations. Dependability of the study was assured by thoroughly documenting all research processes, particularly the research approach, research design, data collection methods, and analysis. Regarding research instruments, the researcher sought advice from experts, who were research supervisors, and conducted a pilot study in a primary school within the study area, which was not part of the actual study. From this pilot study, challenges such as language complexity were highlighted, and adjustments were made to enhance effective data collection. Furthermore, to overcome bias, the researchers cross-verified data using a triangulation of data sources (English teachers, Head teachers, External school quality assessors, and Standard Six pupils) and data collection methods (interviews and focus group discussions, or FGDs). This helped the researcher cross-verify data to reduce bias.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Common Reading Difficulties Standard Six pupils

The main aim of the study was to explore common reading difficulties among Standard Six pupils in primary schools in Tanzania. These are fluency, comprehension, decoding, vocabulary, and memory constraints. The key themes and their sub-themes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Common Reading Difficulties in the English Subject among Pupils

Key Theme	Sub-theme	Category (s)
Illiteracy skills	Reading proficiency	Fluency, comprehension, decoding, and vocabulary

Source : Field Data (2024)

3.2 Fluency

The findings revealed that fluency was among the critical reading difficulties experienced by Standard Six pupils. During the interview, the participant consistently reported that most pupils read slowly with frequent pauses, which led to difficulties in maintaining the meaning of the text. Teachers emphasized that some pupils face challenges in accuracy, rate, prosody, and automaticity while reading. Furthermore, they claimed that these aspects work together to enable pupils to process the text smoothly and meaningfully; failure to have this aspect limits their reading skills. One of the English teachers from school 'B' had this to say:

“In my class, many pupils struggle to read smoothly and at a good speed. A good reader can recognize words quickly and understand them while reading, which helps keep a steady flow. Struggling readers read slowly. This lack of fluency makes it difficult for them to focus on the meaning of the text, as they spend too much time figuring out each word instead of understanding the content (Interview, English Teacher 1, School A, August 2, 2024)”.

During the focus group discussion, pupils reported that fluency was the major challenge they faced. Emphasizing that most of the pupils cannot demonstrate reading a sentence without frequent pauses. One of the pupils from school 'D' commented that:

“I often find reading English to be a challenge. I frequently get stuck on sentences and have to pause now and then. As a result, I feel completely lost when trying to keep up with the story or passage that I was reading (FGD, Pupil, School 'E', 12th August, 2024)”.

Quality assurers also reported that through classroom observation and inspection of pupils' academic records, they found that reading difficulties were a common challenge faced by Standard Six pupils. They recognized that fluency poses a significant challenge. One external school quality assurer stated:

“I have observed that many pupils struggle with reading fluency, reading at a slow pace, which makes it hard for them to follow the flow of the story. This disrupts their ability to grasp key details and events, resulting in a fragmented understanding of the text (Interview, External School Quality Assurer 4, August 20, 2024)”.

Likewise, head teachers, through classroom observation, monthly test reports, and evaluations, found that many pupils struggled with fluency. They found that difficulties with consistent pauses and stuttering were common among pupils, impacting their reading fluency. One head teacher remarked:

“I have observed that many pupils encounter difficulties with decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Problems with decoding stem from an inability to recognize sounds, which makes it challenging for them to sound out words. Additionally, many pupils struggle with fluency, resulting in an inability to read smoothly. This lack of fluency leads to frustration and a limited vocabulary (Interview, Head Teacher 2, School 'B', 19th August, 2024)”.

The findings indicate that fluency was a significant issue affecting many pupils in primary schools. Participants, including English teachers, pupils, head teachers, and external school quality assessors, confirmed the situation.

3.3 Comprehension

The findings indicated that reading comprehension was the prevailing challenge among many pupils. During the focus group discussion, one of the pupils from school 'B' had this to say:

“Understanding what I read in English is a significant challenge for me. Most of the time, when I practice reading, I completely miss the meaning of the text. When they ask me questions about what I have read, I find it difficult to answer them (FGD, Pupil, School 'D', 2nd August, 2024)”

The findings from English teachers also revealed the same concern that reading comprehension was the most challenging aspect for most pupils. Teachers reported that a few pupils struggle with understanding the meaning of texts, making inferences, and comprehending words and phrases. One of the English teachers remarked the following:

“I’ve observed that many pupils have trouble understanding what they read, which hinders their ability to engage with the material. When pupils struggle to comprehend the text, reading becomes a frustrating task rather than an enjoyable. This persistent trouble led to a sense of discouragement, as they find themselves unable to connect with the content or grasp its meaning (Interview, English Teacher 5, School ‘E’, 12th August, 2024)”.

Similarly, head teachers also reported the same. Class teachers frequently reported the challenge during staff meetings. Furthermore, through regular classroom teaching follow-up, we have noted that many pupils struggle to comprehend the information they read. One of the head teachers shared the following insights:

“Many pupils confront reading comprehension. They have trouble understanding the meaning of the texts they read, which restricts their overall learning. Challenges with comprehension led to a diminished interest in reading, which triggered some pupils to dislike reading activities, resulting in prevalent reading difficulties, particularly in comprehension (Interview, Head Teacher 5, School ‘E’, 12th August 2024)”.

Findings from pupils, English teachers, and head teachers confirmed that reading comprehension was a predominant challenge among pupils in primary schools. This predicts that reading English is a prevailing problem among many pupils.

3.4 Decoding

The study's findings revealed that decoding was a significant problem facing most pupils in primary schools. Findings indicated that word recognition was the most challenging aspect for many pupils. Participants, especially external school quality assurers, pupils, and English teachers, all supported. One of the English teachers reported during the interview:

“I’ve observed that decoding words poses a considerable challenge among several pupils in English class, as they regularly mispronounce words or skip over those, they find difficult. Such a problem in decoding affects their ability to grasp the meaning of whole sentences and, by extension, their overall comprehension of the text (Interview, English Teacher 3, School ‘C’, August 14, 2024)”.

In a similar truck, one of the external school quality assurers highlighted that:

“Regularly, I have noted that the majority of the pupils struggle with decoding. Many of them have trouble recognising and distinguishing sounds within words, which is important for accurate word pronunciation. Challenges with identifying sounds hinder their ability to associate letters with their sounds, leading to difficulties with understanding unfamiliar words (Interview, External School Quality Assurer 4, August 20, 2024)”.

During the focus group discussion (FGD), pupils reported that translating written words into sound was the primary challenge that many of them struggled with. They expressed it as a barrier to understanding and interacting with reading materials. One of the pupils provided the following insights:

“In our class and in other classes, most pupils struggle to sound out words correctly, which leads to additional challenges, such as an inability to read fluently. For example, a pupil may know how to recognize letters but cannot sound out (FGD, Pupil, School ‘C’, 14th August, 2024)”.

These findings clearly show that decoding problems were a common issue among many primary school pupils. The challenge can prevent their learning and academic performance.

3.5 Vocabulary

Findings from participants, English teachers, external school quality assessors, and pupils revealed that vocabulary was a significant challenge facing many of the Standard Six pupils in primary schools. During the interview, one of the English teachers provided the following insights:

“I have noticed that a significant number of pupils encounter difficulties with reading, especially when it comes to vocabulary. Most of them struggle to understand the texts they read. I believe that a critical factor influencing these challenges is inadequate exposure to different words. When pupils have a limited vocabulary, they often find themselves stuck with unfamiliar terms, which challenges them to grasp what they are reading (Interview, English Teacher 6, School ‘H’, August 13, 2024)”.

One of the head teachers had this to add during the interview:

“I have observed that many pupils in my school struggle with vocabulary abilities. I have noticed that when they face unfamiliar words, they fail to explain what the text was attempting to say. Consequently, some pupils hesitate to read and become disengaged in reading activities (Interview, Head Teacher 1, School ‘A’, 2nd August, 2024)”.

Similarly, external school quality assurers reported the same that vocabulary was the leading challenge. We have observed during classroom inspections that most pupils get stuck when reading new words. One of the external school quality assurers expressed this during the interview:

“I’ve observed that numerous pupils encounter vocabulary when reading. When they encounter new words, they struggle to comprehend the text, which mostly results in nervousness, leading to restricted reading fluency and impacting their confidence when interacting with various reading materials (Interview, External School Quality Assurer 5, 20th August 2024)”.

Pupils also had the same concern. To them, reading vocabulary was the critical challenge. One of the pupils from school ‘F’ said during the focus group discussion:

“I often find that vocabulary is a fundamental challenge for me. When I face new words, it feels like a wall blocking my understanding of the text. This makes it challenging for me to connect with the content I read (FGD, Pupil, School ‘F’, 14th August 2024)”.

These findings suggest that vocabulary was a significant problem facing many pupils in primary school, particularly those in standard six.

3.6 Memory Constraints

The findings indicated that pupils' inability to retain and recall details from what they have read was a common reading problem. Participants pointed anxiety and ineffective teaching strategies influenced the challenge. Head teachers noted that this inability affects comprehension and the pupils' ability to follow narratives. One head teacher stated:

“I have noticed that memory constraints restrict my pupils’ reading abilities. Many pupils struggle to remember and recall details from what they have read, making it challenging for them to follow along and comprehend the material they are interacting with (Interview, Head Teacher 4, School ‘D’, August 2024)”.

Likewise, findings from English teachers also highlighted that memory constraints were the most prevailing problem among pupils. Most of them demonstrate an inability to remember information they read. One of the English added that:

“Memory constraints are a significant challenge for many pupils. Most of them struggle to recall what they have read, which hinders their ability to understand and engage with the materials. Furthermore, a lack of regular reading practice remains a fundamental reason why many of my pupils struggle to recall what they have learned (Interview, English Teacher 3, School ‘C’, August 14, 2024)”.

The findings revealed that memory constraints were a leading challenge for pupils, mainly due to anxiety and ineffective instructional strategies. Many pupils struggle to remember details from what they have read, which limits their understanding and ability to follow stories. Both head teachers and English teachers highlighted it as a common reading difficulty among primary school pupils.

4. Conclusion

The findings revealed that fluency, comprehension, and decoding were the major challenges for many pupils. Findings also indicated that issues with vocabulary and memory constraints significantly contributed to reading difficulties among pupils. These findings support the findings of various studies conducted in different countries. Agbofa (2023) in Ghana, Gedik and Akyol (2022) in Turkey, Butterfuss et al. (2020) in the United Kingdom, Shumba and Gada (2018) in Zimbabwe, and Spencer and Wagner (2018) in the United States of America [USA].

Findings indicated that fluency was a main challenge for pupils, as evidenced by their slow reading and frequent pauses. Agbofa (2023) reported that similar reading difficulties were observed in Ghana, particularly in terms of fluency. The challenge restricted pupils' academic performance. Likewise, the study by Gedik and Akyol (2022) in Turkey also yielded similar findings, indicating that fluency was a critical issue among many pupils. Cabardo (2016) also reported that insufficient reading skills, particularly in terms of fluency, are a primary challenge among pupils. Furthermore, the findings revealed that comprehension difficulties were another critical challenge. Most of the pupils struggled to understand what they read, which is corroborated by Karanja (2021), who underscored that comprehension difficulties hinder pupils' ability to engage with reading activities. McKeown (2019) emphasized the importance of effective vocabulary instruction in enhancing comprehension. These challenges often stem from multifaceted factors, including limited reading materials, deficits in reading instruction, lack of reading motivation, and a violent and bullying school learning environment (Njonge, 2023).

Apart from comprehension difficulties, decoding was a dominant challenge for most of the pupils. Shumba and Gada (2018) found that decoding problems hindered the development of comprehension abilities among primary school pupils in Zimbabwe. Spencer and Wagner (2018) reported that pupils struggling with decoding also encountered difficulties in understanding the materials they read. Findings revealed that vocabulary difficulties emerged as a critical problem among many pupils. Gedik and Akyol (2022) In Turkey, it was found that many pupils faced difficulties with vocabulary and reading, which significantly impaired their ability to understand texts. Ghaffar1 and Aziz (2019) further highlighted that insufficient vocabulary was a main contributor to reading difficulties among pupils.

Findings further indicated that memory constraints were reported as a critical issue, where many pupils experienced challenges in retaining and recalling information from the texts. The study by Gedik and Akyol (2022) In Turkey, researchers found that weak memory skills restricted pupils' ability to demonstrate effective reading abilities. Karanja (2021) In Kenya, it was also reported that limited intellectual abilities, especially restricted memory, served as an obstacle to reading skills.

These findings, supported by existing literature, underscore the relevance of Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory. This theory emphasizes social interaction as a crucial factor in learning and cognitive development. Thus, teachers need to create effective interactive learning environments, such as utilizing interactive instructional strategies, providing support, and making relevant reading materials accessible to promote pupils' reading skills. Furthermore, to enhance pupils' ability to remember information better, teachers should consider the effective use of visual aids, such as TV programs, and repetition strategies to help pupils foster retention and recall the information they learn.

This study examined the common reading difficulties encountered by primary school pupils in Tanzania, particularly in Standard Six. The findings indicated that fluency, vocabulary, decoding, comprehension, and memory constraints were the critical reading difficulties among pupils, particularly those in Standard Six, in primary schools in Tanzania. These challenges have a significant impact on pupils' performance in English and their overall academic success. Highlighting Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, the study recommended creating a supportive learning environment, such as the use of interactive instructional strategies, relevant reading materials, and providing targeted support. Further, the study suggests the use of visual aids and repetition strategies to enhance pupils' reading skills and improve information retention. The study further highlights the importance of training for teachers to equip them with effective, targeted strategies for reading skills. Well-trained teachers can help pupils master effective reading skills.

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